

THE HINDU VIEW OF ART

The Hindu View of Life

By Professor Sir S. RADHAKRISHNAN

*Upton Lectures delivered at Manchester College,
Oxford, 1926*

Third Impression

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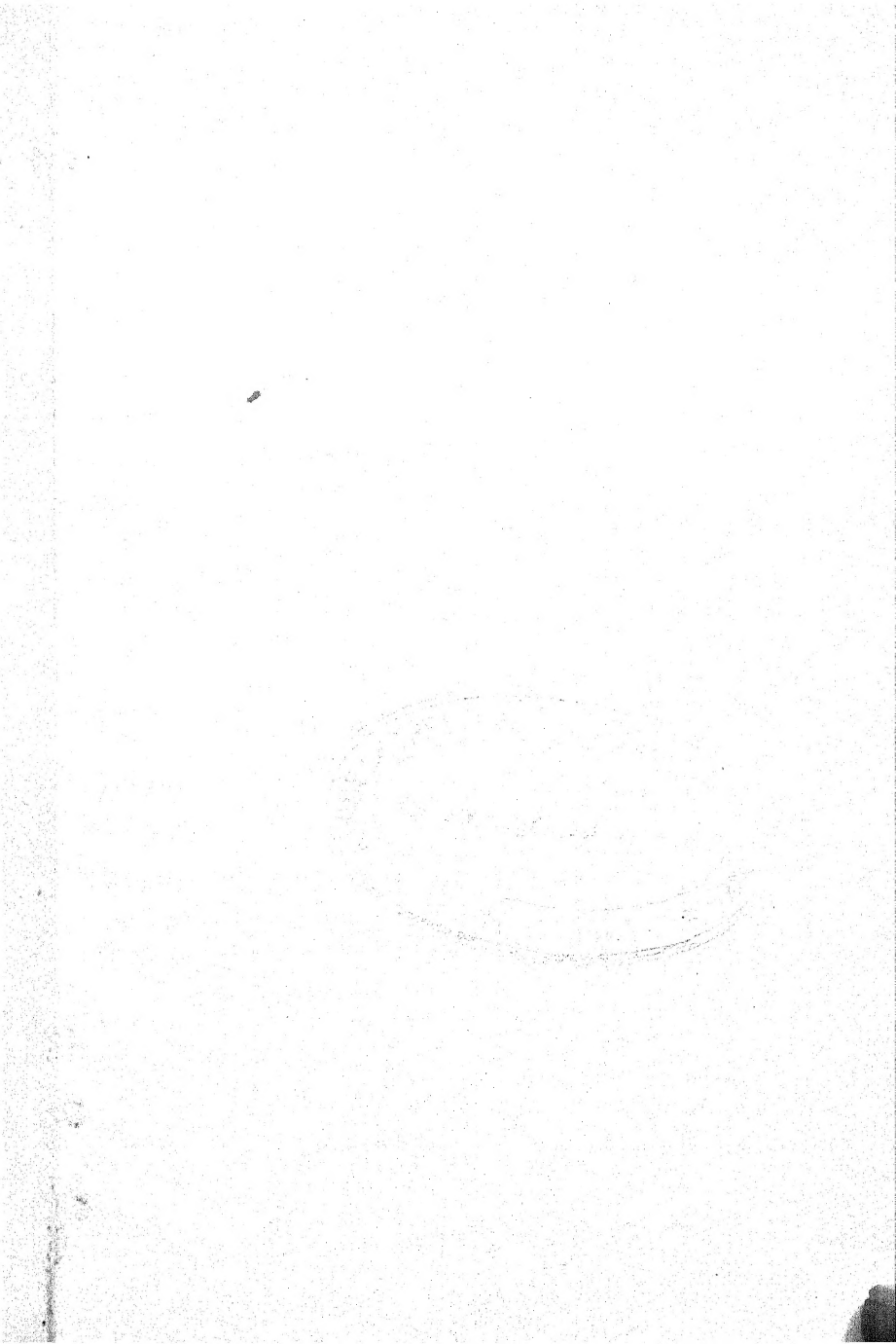




PLATE I.—RASA LILA KRISHNA DANCING WITH THE MAIDS

By kind permission of O. C. Gangoly

The
HINDU VIEW OF ART

by

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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON

ART AND REALITY

by

ERIC GILL

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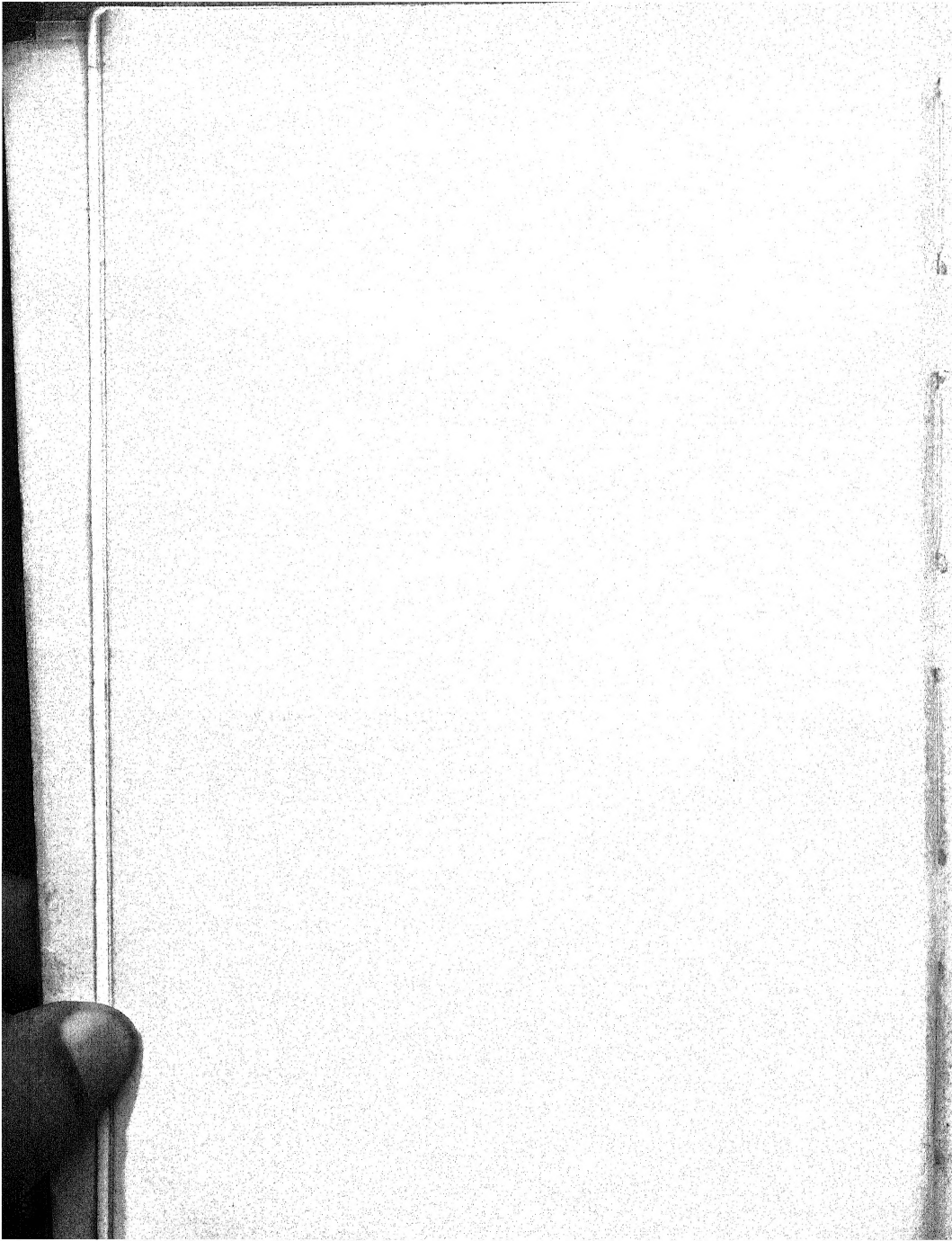
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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
ON
ART AND REALITY

By ERIC GILL

THE unity of the human race must be taken for granted. Differences between one person and another or between one race and another and between the people of one time and another are simply differences of emphasis. This being so, it is to be expected that all human beings and all races will pursue the same ends, and all differences of achievement are to be attributed not so much to differences of aim as to differences of temper and circumstance. It is the more important to grasp this fact with firmness when the subject of discussion is, as in the case of the arts, a thing of which the achievement has been so various and, as in the case of religion and philosophy, a thing of which the expression has been so apparently contradictory, and when, in addition, the subject is complicated by racial and geographical differences.

Now the aim of the human race, in whatever time or place, the end to which all activity is ultimately directed is the discovery and grasping of the real. However variously this aim may be described or pursued; however erroneous may be the conclusions of reason; however distasteful may be the artistic achievements of one people to a people of another

time or place; nevertheless Reality, what is real and not illusory, is what is sought by each and by all.

Now, we may accept as the real, either what is immediately apparent to our senses or, at the other end of the pole, confronted by the countless evidences of the invalidity of conclusions drawn from immediate sensory experience, we may refuse the name of reality to anything but those things of which we have immediate interior knowledge. At the one end is the ordinary, unthinking, and, as he is in Western society called, "practical" man (though it may be doubted whether a perfect example of him really exists), at the other are they who hold that mind is the only reality, and that the universe only exists for him who perceives it. In between is every sort of mixture and compromise. The typical materialist of Western commercial civilisation is confused by the dregs of other traditions; moreover, he takes even his religion of science for the most part on the authority of journalists and popular writers, and very little or not at all on the evidence of his senses. The idealist, on the other hand, is constantly entrapped by circumstances, which, even to himself, seem to demand at least a temporary or conditional assent to the notion of material reality. Urgencies of appetite and of physical pain drag him away from his detachment, and as in the beginning "Adam sinned when he fell from contemplation," so men of all times and places have, whether willingly or unwillingly, become entangled in the net of the senses.

But while the materialist compromises with

spiritual things, and the idealist compromises with material things, and some men refuse any compromise whatever, it remains clear that all men are concerned to discover the truth. The materialist's denial of the reality of spirit is an affirmation of his belief in the reality of matter, and the idealist's denial of the reality of material things, except as ideas in his own mind, is at least an affirmation of his belief in the reality of his ideas. We are all realists in this sense: that we all believe something is real and the world may be categorically divided into these three classes of men: those who believe in the reality of matter and the validity of sensory experience and who deny the reality of spirit, those who believe in the reality of spirit and deny the reality of matter, and those who believe matter and spirit are both real—that both have existence and matter is not an illusion imposed upon purely spiritual beings or, spirit an illusion suffered by beings who have no existence except such as is measurable in terms of time and space.

We are all realists; we are all moved by enthusiasm to discover and embrace what is real. And however lacking in philosophical exactitude our statement of the case may be, we may agree without misgiving that, however little effort they give to its dialectical exposition, all men desire to live and act in accordance with the truth and all men abhor the notion that there is no truth anywhere discoverable. We are all realists; but according to our notions of reality so will our works differ. Could there be a

world of men in which God, pure being, were universally believed to be the only reality, such a world of men would, without doubt, produce a different civilisation from that produced by a world of men, could there be such, who universally believed the evidences of the senses to be the only valid evidence and matter the only reality—matter having no being but becoming, a flux of measurable motion. I am not here saying that either world would be right or wrong; I am simply saying that different forms of life, different shapes of things would result according as one or the other notion of the truth were paramount. Nor am I here saying that the things resulting would in either case be better or worse; I am simply saying that they would be different and that the notion that men are automata whose acts and works do not reflect their thought is as unthinkable as it is historically without foundation.

And if a completely atheist civilisation, could such exist, would inevitably produce different works from a civilisation completely God-fearing, so every civilisation will produce works reflecting the bent of its intellectual enthusiasm. The spiritual enthusiasm of mediaeval Europe, no less than that of more ancient and more modern India, was reflected in its works, its temples, and its laws. If many churches were built it was undoubtedly because many churches were wanted. So great an expenditure of time and treasure could not conceivably have been made upon things considered unimportant. Whatever we may think of their religion or philosophy, we cannot

imagine that they would have done or made the same things if they had had different ideas about man's place and destiny. The fact that to-day in England we spend more time and treasure erecting buildings for the conduct of commerce and less in erecting churches does not prove that we have neither religion nor philosophy, but simply that our religion and philosophy are different. We seek reality as much as at any time, but we hold it to reside more certainly in material things, in measurable things, in things for which the senses are evidence, than in spiritual things, immeasurable things, things which cannot be proved by experiment. The buildings of commerce are just as much evidence of our state of mind as are the buildings of mediaeval Europe or India.

And what applies to buildings applies equally to all other things made by men. If we confine our attention here to the sphere commonly called art, that is to say, to the sphere of painting and sculpture, music and poetry, it is not because we deny the influence of religion and philosophy in any other spheres, but simply because in the sphere of art the human state of mind is more evident. In art works the human being is a mentality at work; in such works mentality predominates, is ruler. In other works, as, for example, in the making of bicycles or sewing-machines, mentality plays a subordinate part. Such machines are little more than the contrivances of an ingenious animal. The bicycle is no more ingenious than the dam of a beaver or the hive of a bee, and only more intelligent because it is

consciously contrived. In such works man is simply moved by the needs of his animal nature, and he makes such things simply by the use of his physical powers. Such are for the most part the things, the works, for which we have in modern Europe and America most enthusiasm. This does not show that we have no religion or philosophy, but simply that we hold no end to be so excellent or so attainable as material success, and, as many of our writers bear witness, we worship matter with the same emotion that, in other times and places, is aroused by the worship of God. Or shall we say that for us God is Power, but formerly they said God is Love.

We hold, then, that every person and every people is concerned to lay hold of reality and that all the works of men display this concern. We hold that different peoples and different times display different works because among such peoples and in such times different notions of reality have been pursued.

Now the phrase "notion of reality" is simply another way of saying Religion and Philosophy. To say, therefore, that the works of men reflect and are the product of their "notions of reality" is the same as saying that the works of men reflect and are the product of their religion and philosophy. Religion and philosophy are as necessary to the production of such monuments as the Forth Bridge or the Aqueduct at Nîmes as they are to the production of such monuments as the Cathedral of Chartres, the Pyramids of Egypt, or the Temples of Ajanta. But

it is not possible to have both kinds of things. You cannot serve two masters or two Gods.

You can have a civilisation which produces works of material power, and incidentally, as a kind of hothouse flowers, works of love, and the things called works of art. Such is the civilisation of twentieth-century Europe and America. Its most complete development will be found in Soviet Russia, and nowhere else is the doctrine that works of art reflect and are the product of religion and philosophy more clearly exemplified. The essence of religion is the affirmation of absolute values. In Russia the absolute value of the State is affirmed. The worship of the communal State is the religion of Russia. Italy, Germany, France, England, and the United States of America—each in its degree is following in the same direction. In all these countries the subordination of the individual and the family to the central administration is becoming absolute. In all these countries the value of material power is receiving more and more absolute affirmation. The philosophy of materialism is the preamble to this religion of power. The existence of the soul is more and more doubted. When it is at last completely denied, what will be left but the determination to gain the whole world? Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die.

On the other hand, you can have a civilisation which, whether consciously or not, produces, as its primary and most obvious product, works of love and incidentally and in a primitive, amateurish kind of way works of convenience and works of power—

e.g. a primitive sort of sanitation, transport by animal power, handlooms and tools such as workmen make for themselves. Such have been the civilisations of all peoples not ruled by men of commerce, of all civilisations informed by a philosophy and religion in which the absolute value of the spiritual is affirmed.

Good men are common in both kinds of civilisation, and in any compromise between the two. It is no part of my contention here that all materialists are wicked men. Nor am I here concerned to say whether a philosophy of materialism contains more or less of truth than one in which the reality of the spiritual is affirmed. It is not here a question of good or bad, of true or false. The whole point of this essay is to show that whatever men do or make their philosophy and religion are at the back of it, and to affirm that those who deny this are compelled in consequence to admit that the works of men are either the product of purely animal instinct (that the Forth Bridge and the Venus of Milo are no more than a sort of beaver's dams) or they are the product of simple caprice.

It is not that I am saying that the works of men, Hindu or Christian, are good because there is this or that philosophy and religion behind them. I am saying more than that. I am saying that it is because there is this or that philosophy and religion behind them that they are there at all—that it is to this or that philosophy and religion that such works owe their very existence, their very being.

Doubtless there are many actions that men do and even many things that men make, which may plausibly be claimed to be the simple product of animal instinct; for man is a kind of animal even if he be also a kind of spirit. His appetites for food and shelter continue to operate even when his destiny as child of God and inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven is forgotten or denied. He will fly from physical danger even when he will not pursue spiritual safety. He will endeavour to crush what hurts him—as a snake in the grass—even when he will not bestir himself to make things for his delight. Let those who will develop our knowledge of the animal side of men's doings. The psychologists, from McDougall to Freud, may be trusted to leave no avenue unexplored. Everything that can be said for man as animal will be said sooner or later by them. There is no need for anything to be said here.

We take here the ground that, whether or no first in time or place, the most important motives for man's activity in doing or making are neither animal instincts nor caprice. We hold that love is more important and not merely prettier than instinct. Upon such a ground and from such a place of vantage we survey the works of men. We see all things as evidence of love. We make what we love—in accordance with our loves so we make. A pair of scissors, no less than a cathedral or a symphony, is evidence of what we hold good, and therefore lovely, and owes its being to love.

And this is no high-flown fancy incompatible with

hard sense. To cut something, whether it be the cloth of which we would make a coat, or only a thread of cotton, is to do something we hold to be good, and if good therefore Godly, and if Godly therefore lovely. The materialist philosopher sees all things in terms of physical force; for him mathematical laws are the ultimate laws and he seeks to bring into his mesh the whole world of movement and to explain it mathematically. Those, on the other hand, who from the beginning saw all things in God, saw all things in terms of love, and they seek to recapture from the materialist wider and wider and deeper and deeper spheres. I say recapture, for they do but regain what formerly they had. This great tide of materialist philosophy, with its resulting affirmation of the absolute good of material power and its accompanying commercialism and industrialism, mass production and financial rule, is a merely mushroom growth on the face of the earth, and the wide vista opened by the telescope, the depths probed by the microscope, both alike disclose at last nothing but the blank walls enclosing a finite universe. Beyond is nothing—nothing discoverable by experiment, nothing measurable, nothing that the materialist can know.

Nevertheless, materialism is as much a philosophy and a religion as Christianity or Hinduism—a philosophy without metaphysic, a religion without the infinite (for the mathematician infinity is a mathematical trick). But it is a religion, and the productions of post-Reformation Europe are as much

religious in their nature as the works of the Middle Ages, or those of Asia.

Insistence on this fact is necessary if we are to understand the works of either East or West, of the present or of the past. And, strange as it may appear at a time when artists profess complete indifference to religion and philosophy, Catholics are the best equipped to gain such understanding, for by the very nature of their religion and philosophy they are able to grasp both extremes. Unlike the Western materialists, "the Church proceeds confidently in her doctrine of God." Unlike the Hindu or the Buddhist, she holds that "matter and spirit are both real and both good." The Catholic can understand and approve the enthusiasm of the materialist for material good and goods, and that of the mystic for spiritual reality and the immersion of the individual soul in the being of God. The supremacy of matter over spirit or of spirit over matter is for the materialist or the idealist only achieved by the denial of the reality of one or the other. For the Catholic, no less religious and no less philosophic than either, the dominance of the spiritual over the material, of mind over matter, is an article of faith, but matter is not, therefore, either evil or an illusion. Neither the errors of the Manichaeans and the Puritans nor those of Bishop Berkeley hold him. The whole history of the Catholic Church is witness to her struggles against this greatest temptation of thinking man—the temptation to the belief that the material life is all or that it is nothing. She emerges from the

struggle the arbiter of East and West because she refuses the denials of either.

And the history of Catholic Art shows very clearly the Church's triumphant combination of the extremes. Buildings such as the Church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople, and the whole circle of mediaeval cathedrals and abbey churches, are as daring in their acceptance of material exigences as they are venerable on account of their spiritual sensibility. The cathedral church of Chartres or the parish church of St. Pierre in the same city may be viewed by the engineer or the sculptor with equal delight. It is true that the temples of India are great architectural monuments, and it is true that the steel bridges of Europe and America are objects of great beauty. Nevertheless, the temples are witnesses chiefly to the spiritual enthusiasm of contemplatives, and the bridges to the material enthusiasm of men of action. Catholicism gavescope to both enthusiasms.

We are not here concerned to put forward the Roman Catholic religion or the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas as the way, the truth, or the life. Here our business is to show that some philosophy, some religion, is behind all human works and is their primary instigation. Without some philosophy, some religion, nothing is done, nothing made, because nobody knows what to do or what to make, nobody knows what is good or what is bad. It has been said that the Church exists in order that words may have a meaning; it is also true that without philosophy and religion there is no meaning in human action.

Now it is held by many, especially, of course, by sceptical minds, that whether or no this or that philosophy or religion is or has been the ruling and effective motive in the making of human works, nevertheless such philosophy and religion are of no importance in relation to the works themselves: that, whether the works be good or bad, it is nothing to do with either the religion or philosophy prevalent among the workers. It is held that there is an aesthetic sense which is independent of good or bad, true or false. "A profound sense of form" is said to account for the goodness of the works of mediaeval builders and sculptors. The paintings of Ajanta and the glass of Chartres owe nothing to the ideas prevailing with their makers except their negligible and unintelligible subject-matter. "A profound sense of form!" And what is profound, what sensible, what formal? The phrase itself is meaningless without religion, without philosophy to gauge height and depth, real and unreal, the seen and the unseen. To such critics the subject is nothing; to the workman, the artist, the subject is all in all. Unless he know what he is making he cannot make anything. Whether it be a church or only a toothpick he must know what it is; he must have it in his mind before he can begin, before he can even choose his material or lay his hand on a tool. And what a thing *is*, what things *are*, and, inevitably, whether they are good or bad, worth making or not, these questions bring him without fail to the necessity of making philosophical and religious decisions. We may accept the

conclusions of others; it may, indeed, be better that we should do so—provided “we know in whom we believe”—but conclusions must be accepted or there can be no beginning. So far from it being true that religion and philosophy have no concern for the artist or he for them, it is only when a religion and philosophy have become the unifying principle of a nation that any great works of art, whether steel bridges or stone shrines, are possible, and the decay of human art follows immediately upon the weakening of men’s grasp upon the motives of action. The great art works of twentieth-century Europe are the product of the great materialist erection of post-Reformation, post-Renaissance thought. Without that thought and its enthusiastic acceptance by widespread populations there could be none of those great monuments of engineering and science which, while we may deplore the servile labour of the millions of workmen employed in their making, we unite to admire because in themselves they are admirable. Similarly the pyramids of Egypt could not have existed but for the theocracy of the ancient Egyptians, and, while we profess to loathe their system of slave-labour, we rightly admire the pyramids because they are in themselves admirable monuments. So it is with the sculptures of India and Easter Island. So it is with the plain-chant of the Roman Church and the building achievements of the European Middle Age. So indeed it is with wireless telegraphy and the telephone; and all these things are the product of human activity directed,

inspired, controlled, and only made possible by the religion and philosophy of their makers.] And the crowning example will be post-Revolution Russia. It remains to be seen in what ways the product will be different from previous human achievements, but one thing is certain: it will be the direct expression of the religious idea and of the philosophy which is the unifying principle, the soul of the Russian Revolution.

Now there are many who say that they like the sculptures of Sanchi, but know nothing of Indian philosophy—that they like the windows of Chartres, but loathe the Catholic religion. They say that they know a good Chinese ivory when they see one, but care nothing for the ideas of Chinamen. They say that they like Westminster Abbey better than the Albert Memorial, but that they are very sure that the ideas of Prince Albert were in every way more enlightened than those of Edward the Third. Therefore, they hold, it is clear that ideas and works have little to do with one another. Thus they come to the conclusion that “a profound sense of form” is all that is required, and that the thing called “form” is independent of intellectual or religious content. This conclusion, however, seems to beg the question, for if a thing has a certain form (and a material thing must have some form) the form must be the right form or the wrong, a good form or a bad, and when we say that a certain thing has right or good form we can only mean that it has the form proper to it if it really is what it purports to be. A profound

sense of form means, therefore, a profound sense of what is right form, and that means a profound sense of what form a certain thing, being what it is, ought to have. But to know what form a thing ought to have involves the knowledge of what the thing that is to be made really is, and that involves knowledge of its significance and purpose, the place where it is to go, and the material of which it is to be made. But knowledge of the significance and purpose of things is, for man, i.e. a rational and not merely animal being, conditioned by general as well as particular considerations. And it is precisely a profound sense of these general considerations, as well as of the particulars, which is necessary to the production of any good and right work.

The enlightenment of our time is with regard to the things of interest to a shop-keeping civilisation whose philosophy is materialism. The religion of commercial England finds its profoundest expression in its great works of engineering and applied science. Such a monument as the memorial to Prince Albert in Hyde Park is simply a mistake—a thing the nineteenth century was foolish to attempt. The Albert Bridge across the Thames at Chelsea is that prince's better memorial. On the other hand, the enlightenment of the thirteenth century in Europe, or of the fifth century before Christ in India, was with regard to the things of interest to men among whom commerce was little developed and even less venerated. We have princes of commerce; they had princes of states. We have soap and marmalade

kings; they had kings of men. They believed in a future life for which this life was a preparation—a life described in terms of love: as, for instance, that heaven consists in the marriage of the soul with God, that eternal bliss consists in the union of the lover and the beloved. We believe that this life is all.

The religion and philosophy of mediaeval Europe or India find their profoundest expression therefore in quite different works from ours. We do wrong to compare the Albert Memorial with Westminster Abbey, or the Houses of Parliament with the tope of Sanchi. We do wrong because we do ourselves an injustice. Imitation Gothic architecture is a monument to our sentimental regard for our ancient past and does not represent the religion and philosophy which inspire our civilisation. But, for example, the bridge across the St. Laurence at Quebec (an improved version of the bridge across the Firth of Forth) will stand comparison with any Gothic cathedral or Eastern temple. And in making such a comparison the important, the fundamental, part borne by religion and philosophy in the conception and execution of human works becomes evident. Would such a thing as the Quebec bridge have been built at any other time than ours or under the inspiration and direction of any other enthusiasms? Could the church at Chartres have come out of any other womb than that of the Catholic religion? But there is Catholicism to-day and there were moneylenders in the eleventh century. Yes, but Catholicism is as powerless to-day as moneylenders

were despised then. Catholicism is powerless now because it commands nothing but its altars and its confessionals. Financiers were powerless then because they commanded nothing but their gold and went about in danger of their skins. These things were all changed because religion and philosophy were changed. Among the early Christians the desire of money was held to be the root of all evil; to-day, that desire is instilled into every schoolboy. This may be right or wrong, but it cannot be called the same. And as religion and philosophy lose their hold on men's minds, so the works done under their inspiration become decadent—fanciful, vulgar, pretty, elegant, extravagant, grandiose—until a new religion and a new philosophy enthrall us and a new enthusiasm inspires new works.

These things being so, the whole business of modern "art" education is clearly foolishness, and a stumbling-block to artists. Painting and sculpture, music and letters are in our time necessarily idiosyncratic. The works of men which we call works of "art" are necessarily merely "self-expression." Our age expresses itself best in great communal works of mechanical skill. These are our works of art. The factory is our art-school. Painting and sculptures are for us mere ornaments, mere fal-lals suitable for museums. There is no public place for them. They mean nothing to anybody but their makers and a coterie of aesthetes.

And strange as it may seem, painters and sculptors were not very great dukes even in mediaeval Europe.

or India. The great works of those ages also were great communal efforts. There was no such thing as a school specially devoted to the learning of a thing called art. Buildings and workshops were their art-schools, and the ideas to be expressed, made manifest in material, were not specially those of the workmen but, as to-day in the case of science and mechanics, of whole populations. Individual prowess was doubtless applauded, but it was seen in right perspective—a thing of small importance compared with the right-thinking of the community. A mediaeval cathedral, like the Quebec bridge or a common microscope, expresses the genius of a people.

And if our steel engineering may stand comparison with mediaeval stone building, inasmuch as both are authentic expressions of the peoples who made them, and show the differences of religion and philosophy in our age as compared with another, so may the works of mediaeval Europe be compared with those of the Hindus and Buddhists. But in this case what is chiefly notable is similarity not difference. Hindu and mediaeval images are the same in *kind*. Both are made according to hieratic canon, both are devoid of idiosyncrasy. Both are negligent of anatomical verisimilitude. Both are of public rather than private significance. Both are concerned with the expression of conceptions of general importance and widespread belief and not with personal and particular likings. "Life-like" portraiture is rare (the Great Seal of Henry IV is

identical with that of Henry V except for the change of numerals—they are symbols of the King rather than of *a* king—and the countless images of the Buddha are like no individual). Both are entirely inaeesthetic, in the sense that in neither case were the artists consciously concerned to produce things of beauty for beauty's sake. Beauty in both cases is the radiance of things made as they ought to be made. The best works and the best periods are those in which the nature of the thing to be made is best known and most poignantly expressed—the time and the place and the loved one all together.

There are many bad works in all periods of human history, and in all cases their ugliness is a privation—they are lacking in what they ought to have. Bad works are simply the product of men who do not know what they are making or who do not care. An early Christian crucifix is a better work of art because it is a better crucifix. Look after goodness and truth, and beauty will take care of itself.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THERE has so far been no book on the Hindu view of art corresponding to the available introductions to various European systems of aesthetics. Mr. Havell's *Ideals of Indian Art* is more concerned to explain particular examples of Indian art in the light of the Hindu view of art than with that view as such, and all that is available on the topic are Dr. Coomaraswamy's two small essays included in his admirable *Dance of Siva*. In the following essay I have attempted to elaborate the plan laid out by Dr. Coomaraswamy, and have sought to supply such a short, simple exposition of the Hindu view of art as might interest the average uninitiated English reader.

It must be expressly noted that it is not a book on Hindu aesthetics, but an essay on the general Hindu attitude to art. For the Hindus never wrote a treatise on the philosophy of beauty of which an exposition could be given, nor did they value, as Dr. Coomaraswamy has so often insisted, and as Mr. Gill has previously explained, their works of art purely as "works of art." A recent critic, Mr. K. de B. Codrington, has summed up the general Hindu attitude beautifully when he said: "Indian thought does not isolate objects by aesthetic analysis or any other analytical process. The associations of a piece of sculpture or a whole temple and the associations of the person brought into contact with it both contribute to the state of mind from which the sense

of values is derived. Among the associations of a piece of sculpture or a temple, which, so to speak, wait upon the mind, its subject or dedication and its repute as a place of sanctity, its legends or miracles, and the thousands of pieces of money that have been paid to bring it into being, all have import. It follows that devotion can derive value from any chance stone or redaubed rock. This confusion between the religious and aesthetic, so obvious to the analytic mind, is not a matter of failure to arrive at distinctions, but of a definite refusal to admit of distinctions in the sum of reactions that is human life, in which qualities are held to exist as stupid preferences and intensity alone is satisfying."¹ "From the point of view of the Indian artist, too," Mr. Binyon has written, "the religious import was everything: their conscious endeavour was concentrated upon that. Design, colour, composition, all the purely aesthetic elements of their work, were left to the more intuitive activities of the mind."² In writing my essay I have therefore followed the example of the authorities cited above, and departing from the strict sense of the words art and aesthetic as they are used in Europe, I have summed up under the general title of the Hindu view of art all such considerations—religious, philosophic, sociological, aesthetic, and technical—as might be helpful for the understanding of Indian art.

¹ *An Introduction to the Study of Mediaeval Indian Sculpture*, pp. 19-20.

² *My Pilgrimage to Ajanta and Bagh*, Mukul Dey. Intro. Laurence Binyon, pp. 19-20.

Although, however, I have relaxed the term aesthetics to cover all sorts of considerations, I have woven these considerations on the golden thread of that idealism which runs through all Hindu activity and thought. The essay thus falls into three well-defined parts and discloses a continuity not far removed from the ideal of a logical classification.

As will be obvious from Mr. Eric Gill's Introductory Essay, appended to this volume, and from the occasional footnotes from M. Jacques Maritain and other European authorities, a constructive attempt has been made to relate the Hindu view of art to its counterparts in Western systems of thought. I hope that this will induce the reader to believe that behind the many differences of form which the peculiar backgrounds of different nations impose on their arts and crafts, there is a common ideal of beauty in the pursuit of which all the various peoples of the world can come together to appreciate each other's differences in the humane spirit of a tolerant understanding, sympathy, and good will.

Throughout this essay I have taken liberties with the Sanskrit language for which I must apologise. But the correct phonetic pronunciation of Hindu phraseology is an ideal which the average English reader can hardly be expected to attain, and too many dots and dashes would, I thought, hamper rather than help me to convey the meaning of archaic terms, which should really be totally absent in such a book as this.

I have a great many debts to pay (if indeed they

can be paid by merely acknowledging them) for the kindly interest and help of many distinguished authorities on Indian art. To Mr. Havell and Dr. Coomaraswamy I owe the first impulses which led me to attempt this essay, and both of them have generously encouraged me with advice and criticism. Mr. Herbert Read and Mr. K. de B. Codrington read the manuscript, and Sir William Rothenstein gave me his views on several controversial issues both in writing and through discussion. Last but not least, I have to record my deep gratitude to Mr. Eric Gill for favours too numerous to mention. The deep religion of his teaching has been to me literally the revelation of a new gospel. I hope I shall be able one day to assimilate the lessons I have learnt from him. Meanwhile, I find refuge in the memory of those many hours through which I have sat at his feet listening to the wisdom, some of which he has enshrined in the discourse accompanying this essay.

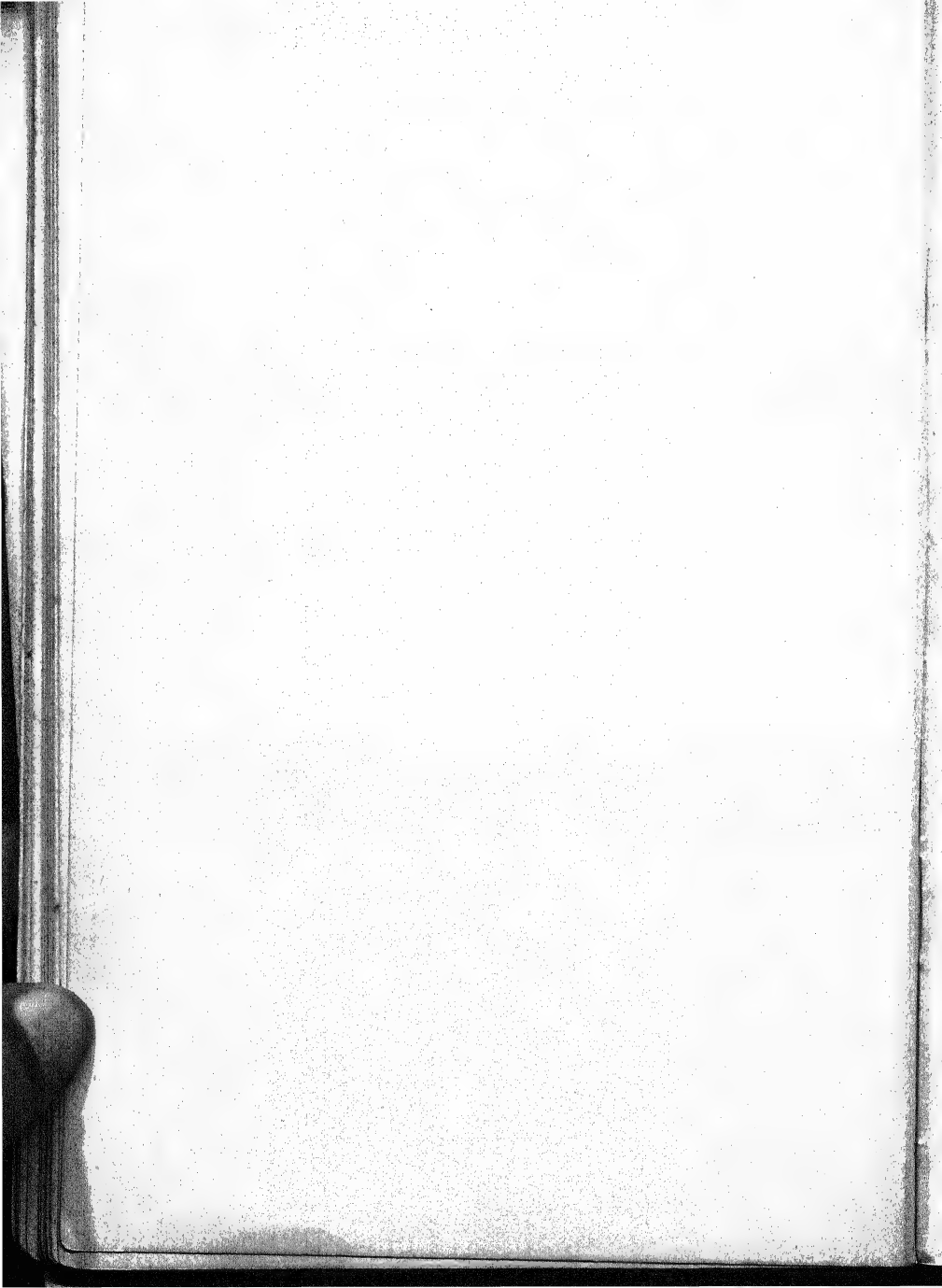
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M. R. A.

HENDON, 1932

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PRELIMINARY

THE Hindu view of art is the Hindu view of life, life as interpreted by religion and philosophy. There is in the Sanskrit language no exact equivalent for the word art as it is used in modern European languages, for art in India has seldom been understood in the modern Western sense of art for art's sake. In that country, mysteriously dominated by the urge to seek for and adore a reality more real than that offered by sensible or intellectual experience, art has been consecrated to the service of the intuitively realised ideal of a religious philosophy and a philosophical religion.

For the most part it has been an hieratic art executed to meet the demands of the temple in obedience to priestly dictation. The priests had evolved a canon for the proper making of sacred objects; the *Silpin*, or the skilled workman, attached to the temple, who may more correctly be called in English terms artisan, craftsman, or manual worker than "artist," merely followed these traditional methods handed down from father to son and son to son in pupillary succession.¹ I shall show later

¹ "In the powerfully social structure of mediaeval civilisation (too) the artist ranked simply as an artisan" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, p. 21). Also "the artistic representation of sacred objects was a science governed by fixed laws which could not be broken at the dictates of individual imagination" (Mâle, *Religious Art of the Thirteenth Century in France*). The Greeks also followed a canon. Polykleitos

how the canon, seeking to control and drill the artisan's instruments of expression into a perfect harmony with the profundity of his vision, recognised the contribution which he might himself make to create a living tradition, instead of merely following archaic conventions; but here it must be clearly understood that his individual genius was not given the egotistical importance that is attached to it in the West. Rather it was merged into the anonymity of his caste, the quality of whose joint workmanship represents in its evenness the true spirit whether good or bad of the society which it served and the age in which it lived and worked.

Although, in the main, Indian art has been produced in obedience to the hieratic canon, a great body of industrial and narrative art has been and still is executed in India by private individuals, either as a personal accomplishment or to supply other wants of the community than those specifically connected with the temple. But, since all life is for the Hindus a sacrament, the same ideal of religion and philosophy which is the goal of priestly art dominates all other forms of art too, and where it does not dominate the term Hindu, applied to the art of India, ceases to apply.

To give the authority of religion and philosophy to industrial and narrative arts and crafts the view

(440-410 B.C.), for instance, wrote a treatise on proportion on the basis of certain Egyptian rules of art, and there was a code attributed to Vitruvius which is said to have been followed by Leonardo da Vinci and Lysippus.

was evolved with remarkable ingenuity that the *Veda* (the oldest holy books of the Hindus) were *Sruti*, heard or revealed, and as such the media through which God, the Cosmic Soul, the Higher Self of man, had revealed His inexhaustible source of truth to the Vedic poets. *Vac*, the Divine Word, it was said, had entered the poet's mind and inspired him to utter those urgings of the vaster life that are crystallised in the holy books.¹ The burden of this whole doctrine is that God is in man and nature, lying about us as a vast world of the As-yet-Unknown, Infinite and Inexhaustible, waiting to be recognised. All our knowledge consists in the discovery of the forms in which He has already manifested Himself, rather than in the creation of any new truth. At first, God, the All-pervasive Cosmic Self, created the world and entered it out of sheer excess of joy—that is to say, He split Himself, His Oneness, into the manyness of the universe, because He found joy in creating, because in so doing He realised Himself; then just as He had realised joy in creating diversity out of His Oneness, in manifesting Himself in many phases, so there arose in the universe of diversity, in the heart of finite humanity, the urge to realise joy by creating Oneness out of its manyness, unity out of its multiplicity, the Infinite out of its finitude. By the

¹ The sense in which the Hindus regard their holy books to be revealed would seem to be similar to that expressed by Hegel: "Revelation is the realisation of God in man's intelligent nature."

very necessity of our desire to attain the unity of God, by the very impulse to seek Perfection in the Divine Being, to realise, to return back to the essence out of which we have sprung, we try thus to enlarge the contours of our souls by reading the message of the Infinite in everything and by setting down our answer to it through art and literature.¹

As this view and others like it are in the mind of every artist in India, whether he be a great painter or a poor carpenter, there is in all Indian art a constancy of religious motives. Everything has a Divine meaning, and no element of life is treated for its own sake. The figures, the trees, the flowers, the birds are all taken from the conditions of natural life, but they are all removed into the realms of celestial life. Every little detail in a picture, on a statue, or on a pot is a symbol, a gesture to God that men see Him in everything, a message to men that God has given to everything a Divine significance. And since everything is thus seen through the God-intoxicated imagination, realism in the European sense has no place in Indian art; the general process employed by the artist being one of deliberate visualisation of the essential quality of the thing he has in mind to execute before he begins the task

¹ "The word," says St. Augustine, "is in a way the art of the Almighty God. And by the word the whole Divine work was done, *omnia per ipsum facta sunt*. It is through His word and His art that God attains, controls, realises everything He does. And in the same way it is through His art that the human artist ought to attain, control, and realise his work" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*).

of technical elaboration. And even in portraiture recourse is had to the image recollected in tranquillity, rather than to the memory image taken direct from nature.¹

There is no distinction between the "fine," the "decorative," the "secular," and the "canonical" arts. All art is one, and its goal the beauty of the Divine Life.²

Thus although, in spite of the preponderatingly disparate aims and methods of Indian and modern European craftsmen, foreigners can enjoy the monuments of India from the point of view of their particular aesthetics, we are not entitled by the demands of an internal as opposed to an external criticism to look to India for an aesthetic apart from religion and philosophy,—the Hindu view of art is, I repeat, the Hindu view of life, life as interpreted by religion and philosophy.

What exactly is the Hindu view of life and what precisely is the aesthetic implicit in it? The detailed answer to this question will be attempted in the main body of this essay. Meanwhile, in order briefly to indicate the general nature of my thesis I may provisionally answer the question here.

The Hindus commonly regard the ordinary phenomenal world, not as reality which is an Absolute, infinite, unconditioned state of Being (God),

¹ "Art abides entirely on the side of the mind" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*).

² "Art should so dominate our lives that we might say: there are no works of art, but art only. For art is then a way of life" (Herbert Read).

knowledge of which is derived rather through intuition than through sense-perception, but as becoming the relative aspect of the infinite truth known to us under the limitations of our reason and ratiocination, the Unknowable as we know It. This conception of the world as the Appearance (*Maya*) of the Unknowable Reality, God, is familiar to the learned and the unlearned alike in India. But the Unknowable Reality, or God, is not imagined as a huge giant sitting in the heavens beyond the skies, on a golden throne, surrounded by a host of angels and fairies. Everybody, even the most illiterate peasant, knows that God is in man and nature, the essence of man's being, his Higher Self, the essence behind nature. He is understood to be in man and nature, however, not quantitatively but qualitatively, not physically but spiritually. He is in man and nature as the numerical unit one is, for instance, in all the other numerical terms, two, three, four, five, six, seven, etc., or as the idea of a new invention is in the invented machine, or a scheme for a political or social reform is in the actual benefits that accrue from that reform. He is a unity, an ideal, an order. He is the essential spirit behind the world of matter manifested in the world of matter. That is to say, the body of man and the body of nature is the body of God.

If God is in man and nature, how, it may be asked, does the distinction between Reality and Appearance, Being and Becoming, Infinite and finite, arise? The answer to this question is plainly

this, that the Infinite, who is essentially spirit, although pervading the universe and entering it, remains separate and self-complete, as the number one remains itself and separate in its oneness, although pervading and entering other numbers. It is an element, an aspect, a unit, a self-realised, self-contained, boundaryless whole. The finite forms of God, all the things of the universe that partake of His nature, are thus necessarily incomplete, limited, as contrasted with the Unlimited, the Infinite. Man, who in his higher nature partakes of the spirit of God, has, in the process of creation and evolution, lost the essential Infinity of his Higher Self in the complexity, the chaos, and the disorder of the world, and become enshrouded in the veils of illusory experience, by acquiring certain habits of feeling, action, and thought which he never suspects to be unreal until he questions life and the things around him.¹ His customary preoccupations with practical ends and the necessity of understanding the behaviour of the things among which he lives lead to a mistaken belief in, and emphasis on, the material outside world.

The Hindus insist, therefore, that man should maintain a proper balance within the world of Reality-Appearance, Infinite-finite. Lest the experience of the senses, of vitality, and of rational thought drown man in the ocean of limitations and enslave

¹ "On account of our perversity and vanity knowledge is often an obstacle to the Holy Spirit" (Maritain, *Prayer and Intelligence*).

him so that he loses his higher nature, his God-Self, altogether, they recommend that he should question life and the things around him and set aside all the habits of feeling, activity, and thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set upon the God, the Pure Being within him. Thus, by contemplation on the Infinite Soul within him, and without him, he will realise a vision of the Divine order and acquire the Divine virtues and be enabled to preserve a proper balance between his God-Self and his human-self in leading his ordinary worldly life,¹ until he attains complete salvation from the cycle of birth and re-birth.

The intuitive realisation of Reality, God, the Higher Self, is, however, only acquired after an arduous religious practice, for man with his over-dependence on the senses and vitality, and with his pride of intellect, is so imbued with the habits of sensible, conative, and intellectual experience that he does not realise how in spite of their great value as sources of knowledge these three faculties are essentially limited until he actually subjects himself to a severe analysis by reflection or pure contemplation. Two ways of the religious life are, therefore, enjoined on him, two ways of restoring the balance within the Infinite-finite. The first of these is the way of renouncing the world and all its obligations

¹ "The starting-point of human knowledge is to be found in the highest type of knowledge—the intuition of the Pure Being" (Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion*).

for a time in order to engage in solitary contemplation (away from all worldly distractions), and the gradual realisation of the distinction between the unreal worldly self and the Real Higher Self. If successful, the ascetic becomes self-conscious, and is freed from the contingencies of individuality—that is to say, he ceases in reflection to be a person in the psychological sense and becomes, as it were, one with the Absolute Cosmic Consciousness. Having realised Enlightenment, that is with the balance between the God and the man in him restored, he can come back to live the ordinary worldly life until he is absolutely freed from it. The second way is the way of disinterestedness, dispassionate performance of good deeds while living the ordinary worldly life and the acquirement of the Higher Self and the Divine attributes through constant prayer and meditation exercised according to the rules of Hindu religious ritual.¹

This is the fundamental idealism of Hindu religion and philosophy; and, although the terms of its statement vary considerably as we turn the pages of India's cultural history from the earliest times to the present day, it nevertheless runs through all the bewildering multiplicity of Indian thought like a constant stream, rising and falling, no doubt, with every fresh turn of the tide, narrow at places and broad at others, yet in the main running constantly, ever alive, ever fresh.

¹ "Ceremonies are the outward expression of inward feeling" (Lao Izu).

And, since this fundamental conception of the Cosmic Life has been the very climate in which man's thought has been nourished in India through the ages, every word, every thought, every deed of the Hindu life is related to and flows from it. The Hindu conception of beauty is thus implicit in the very definition of the God-Self of man as *Ananda* (pure joy, bliss), which is the vast undefinable goal of all human endeavour and aspiration, and which we seek to realise by contemplation of its manifold differentiations of forms.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, a little treatise appended to the great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, confirms this doctrine, when Sri Krishna, the figurative and metaphorical symbol of the Cosmic Soul, gives an exposition of the mystery of creation. He declares that He creates and pervades "the whole universe." The eternal qualities of man's ratiocination, the qualities which man recognises as Divine, are really only aspects of His Soul. Beauty is one such quality. "For whatsoever is . . . beautiful . . . understand thou that to go forth from a fragment of my Splendour."¹ In essence, beauty is really His chief quality, indistinguishable from His Supreme Being, for He says further: "I am the Splendour of splendid things."²

¹ "The Being of all things derives from the Divine Beauty" (St. Thomas Aquinas).

"Beauty is a unique ray of the celestial brightness" (Ludwig Tieck).

² "God is beautiful. He is the most beautiful of beings, because as Denys the Aeropagite and St. Thomas explain,

Here, then, in a language plain enough for ordinary folk, is set forth the view that beauty is only one of the many aspects of the Cosmic Soul. Philosophy tries to realise it impersonally through intuition, religion seeks to realise it through the worship of its personal incarnations, and art, which is a method which both of them employ, seeks to express its spirit through representations of its comprehensible aspects, to realise it expressionistically. The studio of the Hindu artist is, therefore, not different from the poet-philosopher's hermitage, or the poet-priest's temple. In each, man is concerned to find Oneness by contemplation on the many. In each, he is struggling to emancipate himself from the self with its multifarious relationships into the Absolute Not-Self. In each, he seeks to realise the Supreme Soul and its essence, eternal bliss.

But how precisely is this ideal of Pure Joy and Beauty to be realised? The question was asked and an answer supplied in an art-treatise called the *Vishnudharmottaram*. "Vajra said: The Supreme Being has been described as devoid of form, smell, and emotion, and destitute of sound and touch: how, then, can a form of Him be made?" "Markendya replied: *Prakriti* (universal matter) and *Vikriti* (the forms of that matter) came into existence through

His beauty is without alteration or vicissitude, without increase or diminution, and because it is, not like the beauty of things, which have all a particularised beauty, *particulatum pulchritudinem sicut et particulatum naturam*, He is beautiful by Himself, absolutely Beautiful" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*).

variation in the form of the Supreme Soul. That form of Him which is scarcely to be seen was (manifested and) called Matter. The universe (thus presents) the aspects of Him when endowed with form. Worship and meditation of the Supreme Being are possible (for human beings) only when He is endowed with form (because human beings are limited and finite). But the highest condition of the Supreme Soul is to be imagined without form."¹

Thus it was that precisely in a world of idealistic thought recourse was had to idolatry, the worship of forms and images as representations of the Divine Being. A symbolist technique was invented to express the various qualities of the Supreme Soul, and externalised form was given to Him in imaginary Superhuman types formed by the juxtaposition of bodily elements taken from the norm of human and natural life. Anthropomorphic images thus came to be in India, as they did in Greece, representations of spiritual powers. Only, however, in India the artists did not embody their conceptions of God in the shapes of men and women as the Greeks did; but, insisting on the transcendence of God over men, the Hindus always portrayed Him as a Superman, someone beyond men. Hence, the many-headed gods and many-armed goddesses of the Hindus, which, seeking to represent an eternal abstract ideal of beauty, have no exact counterpart in nature, and are purely mental creations, "works of pure design."²

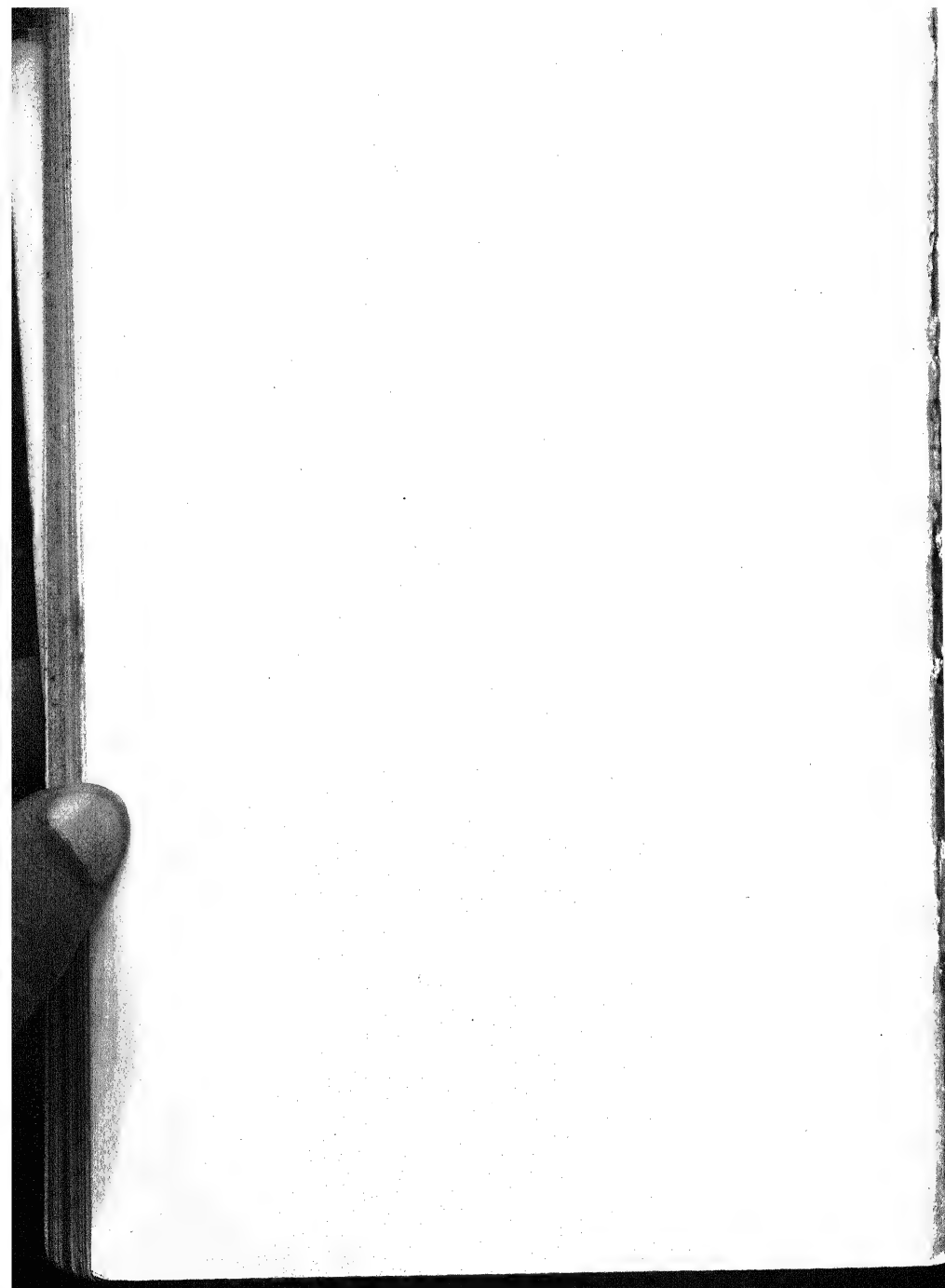
¹ *Vishnudharmottaram*, edited Stella Kramrisch.

² Denman Ross, *A Theory of Pure Design*.



PLATE II.—YAKSHANI

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An elaborate psychology of religious ritual had been outlined in Hindu sacred literature on the principle that by worshipping the God man becomes the God. The main form which this ritualistic worship took was called *Yoga*,¹ the method of contemplation on some mental conception (*dhyana-mantra*) of the Supreme Being either in imagination or by the fixture of attention on a physical image of the Deity into which a particular mental conception (*dhyana-mantra*) had been translated by the artist. Since the artist had to translate mental conceptions of God into physical images and forms, the method of *Yoga* (contemplation) was enjoined on him as a technical procedure, so that he might visualise the mental form which he sought to represent in all its details vividly, before he set out to enshrine it in a concrete image to serve as an aid to meditation in the temple.

A theory of beauty was expressly worked out in connection with poetry, drama, and the dance, by

¹ The word *Yoga* is used to cover two meanings, which must be carefully distinguished. It signifies (a) the ideal of union with God, (b) the method of contemplation employed to secure such a union. In a general way, as I shall show later, it is not different from what has often enough been vaguely recognised by European artists and writers: "I often think one ought to be able to pray before one works—and then leave it to the Lord. Isn't it hard to come to grips with one's imagination—throw everything overboard? I always feel as though I stood naked for the fire of Almighty God to go through me—and it's rather an awful feeling. One has to be so terribly religious in order to be an artist" (D. H. Lawrence, *Letters*).

the interpretation of the professed ideal of religion and philosophy, *Ananda* (joy) as *Rasa* (the delight experienced through a work of art). And this conception of *Ananda* (joy) as *Rasa* (delight), from the certain evidence of its use as a criterion of the art of painting, may be considered as equally applicable to sculpture, architecture, and the other arts.

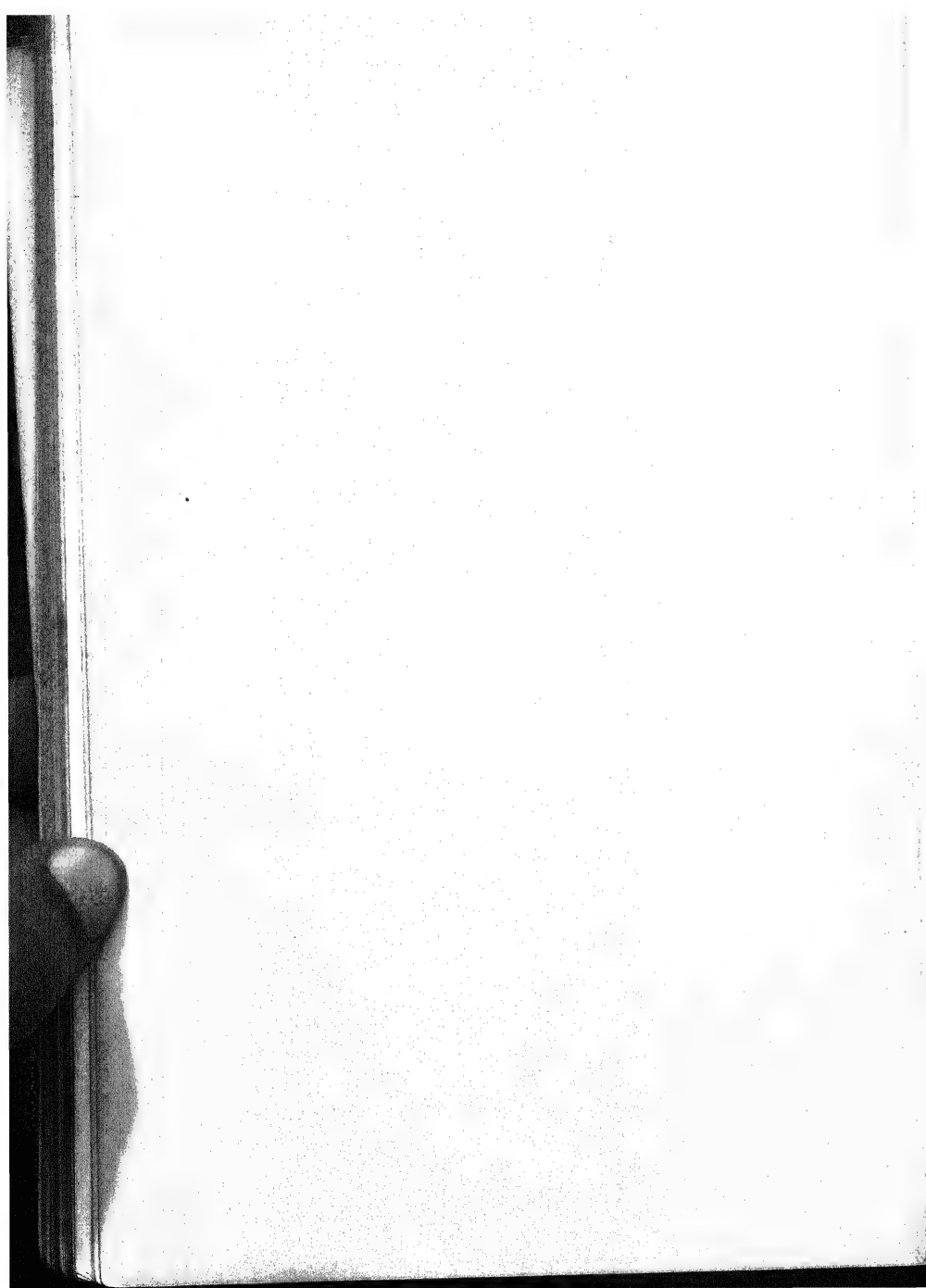
Since, then, there is an overlapping of the ideal of religion and philosophy with the ideal of art, it becomes necessary to undertake a survey of the former before the latter can be properly comprehended.

To an exposition of the chief religious and philosophical conceptions of the Hindus, therefore, I propose to address myself, before I treat of aesthetics proper and of the principles of artistic practice enjoined in the *Silpa-shastras* (Art-treatises). Throughout the course of my survey of the religious-philosophical conceptions I shall explain the symbolism of the main Hindu gods and goddesses, and shall draw the aesthetic implications of theological and metaphysical doctrine, wherever it is possible to do so, from Indian literature. The religio-philosophical survey might thus partake of the nature both of a chapter on the Hindu pantheon and of a history of the Hindu view of art.

I

THE RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL
HYPOTHESIS

28913



I

THE VEDA

(I)

IN tracing the development of the chief religious and philosophical conceptions of the Hindus with a view to showing their aesthetic implications, I shall take my start from the invasion of India by the first contingent of the Aryan hordes from the plateaux of Central Asia, since the precise character of the civilisation, of which traces have been found at Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley, has not yet been determined,¹ and the aboriginal Dravidian culture, which certainly flourished when the Aryans came down, was completely assimilated by them, and may thus be considered as their inheritance, lending itself to more convenient consideration as part and parcel of our Vedic heritage rather than as distinct from it.

Looked at through the haze of time, the beginnings of the Indo-Aryan civilisation seem to have been lost in the dim sphere of mythology. There is not the slightest certainty about the time of its origin, although scholars have sometimes adduced evidence and sometimes made speculative guesses to show that

¹ Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilisation*. Probsthain, 1932.

See also Ram Prashad Chanda, "The Indus Valley in the Vedic Period," *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 31.

it began about five millenniums before the birth of Christ. But whatever the date of its origin, it is certain that it was a joint product of Dravidian and Aryan cultures. We do not know whether the Dravidians were the original neolithic inhabitants of India or came to the country like the Aryans as invaders, but we do know that the Aryans—the tall, handsome, fair-skinned nomads from the wilds of Central Asia—had long searched for lands where they might win easy bread for themselves, and find plenteous pastures for their sheep; where they might roam under friendlier skies, or settle down among abundant waters. Filtering into the rich plains of Northern India they found what they wanted. Nature had here showered her gifts of fruit and flowers with a bounteous hand. The long ranges of the Himalayas, stalwart sentinels, stood guarding the country from attack on one side, the roaring seas protected it on the other, and between them there were rivers to quench the thirst of its vast plains, and to make them burst out in all their glorious robes of green grass and many-coloured flowers. The seasons melted here like the soft water-colours on the palette of a supreme artist, and each element of the picturesque scene seemed to glow bright like a jewel. The nomads put an end to their wandering life and settled down at last in the fertile plains. The land of the five rivers was their first stronghold, but gradually they spread the wave of their conquest towards the Gangetic valley, not only winning that rich alluvial country, and subjugating its dark-

skinned inhabitants, but being also won over by them both.

The evidence of comparative mythology indicates that these Aryans had certain religious poetry floating on the surface of their keen memories before they descended upon India, but it is certain that the first flush of delight of the Aryan consciousness at its communion with the prodigal nature of India became early crystallised in a number of descriptive nature poems as they progressed towards the Gangetic valley.

So far, however, all this poetry had been orally transmitted from father to son, and from son to son. The shock of intercourse with the alien culture of the Dravidians evoked in the conquerors the desire to preserve their literary inheritance, and although during the time it took to give it a permanent shape it became strongly mixed with aboriginal Dravidian belief, this was the way that the Veda, the oldest books of the Hindus, came to be composed.

As a whole, the *Veda*, *sruti* (heard or revealed), was compiled during a long period from about 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C., and includes the following extensive literature: (1) The four Vedas proper, *Rig*, *Sama*, *Yajur*, *Atharva*, which are "hymns, prayers, and sacred formulas, offered by priests to the gods on behalf of rich lay-sacrificers, charms for witchcraft, medicine, and other homely practices, manipulated by magicians and medicine-men, in the main for the plainer people."¹ (2) The *Brahmanas*,

¹ Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 25.

which are "expositions of the sacrifice, illustrated by legends in the manner of the Jewish Talmud."¹ (3) The *Aranyakas*, including the Upanishads, which contain "speculations of the higher sort, philosophic, cosmic, psycho-physical, and theosophic, gradually growing up with and out of simpler beliefs."² (4) The *Sutras*, which are treatises "containing a considerable body of set rules for conduct in everyday life, at home and abroad, that is a distinct literature of customs and laws."³

Of the Vedas proper, the *Rig* is the most important as the first document of ancient Indian literature. It consists of about a thousand hymns dedicated in the main to the gods, both those of the original Aryan invention and those of the Non-Aryan deities whom the Aryans borrowed from the Dravidians. The Aryan gods are mostly nature gods. The elements fire, water, air, and earth have been deified, as also their actions and interactions on each other. The motive which inspired the poets seems to have been the feeling of awe in the face of gigantic natural phenomena, and wonder at its magnificence. The human mind clothes its own reactions to experience with form. Out of the thin stuff of memory and imagination are evolved the concrete forms and images of supernatural powers. The Aryans conceived these gods anthropomorphically, and described them as wearing clothes, bearing arms, and riding in chariots. Sometimes the Rig-Vedic poets offer

¹ Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*



PLATE III.—SIVA-LINGAM
SIXTH CENTURY A.D.

By kind permission of Ananda Coomaraswamy

"primaeval, childlike, naïve prayers" to these very daemons of fancy that they have exorcised from their minds and planted on the high pedestal of god-hood. Sometimes, they discuss the aspects which have led to the formulation of the various gods—the "allegorical representations of the Supreme Deity." But throughout the Vedas, the poets (being also priests) have the ends of the sacrifice in view, the sacrifice where these hymns are to be sung. The hymns partake, therefore, of the nature of appeals to the gods to protect men in their troubles, and their spirit is well described in the formula:

I give to thee that thou mayest give to me.

Of the gods invoked in the Veda, the following are the chief: Dyaus or Dyaus Pitar, sky or father sky; Surya and Savitar, Vishnu, the sun-gods; Ushas, the dawn; Agni, the fire; Prithvi, the earth; Soma, the intoxicating vegetable juice used in ritual; Indra, the god of lightning and thunder; Varuna, the universal embracer and encompasser; Adityas, boundless ones; Asvins, horsemen; Vayu, the wind; Rudra, the fierce god of destruction and waste, etc. This list was considerably enlarged as the Aryans continued to assimilate the gods and goddesses of the Non-Aryan inhabitants of India.

As the Aryans not only borrowed their deities from the Non-Aryans but learnt from them the way to indulge in the esoteric intimacies of *Yoga* (union with God) through the practice of *Bhakti* (devotional worship), the contribution of the latter towards the

formation of the culture on which the conquerors stamped their name must be emphasised. The Dravidians were by far the most predominant portion of the population, and had attained a high degree of culture long before the Aryans entered India. They had built up devotional cults of the phallus and of nature spirits and mother goddesses (Yaksas and Nagas), and possessed themselves of an elaborate pantheon, which, as I have said, the Aryans slowly adopted. They had evolved a philosophy of *Karma* (deeds), that good and bad actions in the past life govern the nature of birth and rebirth in *Samsara* (the Universe); and they had cultivated several industrial arts and crafts, and perhaps made and used images for worship, and raised secular and religious structures of wood, brick, and stone.

If the Aryans owed so much to the Dravidians, what, it may be asked, is the net result of their own individual contribution?

I think the nature and extent of their achievement may, for lack of any very conclusive evidence, be judged from Vedic literature to be twofold: (1) in regard to theology, and (2) in respect of speculative thought.

When the acceptance of the numerous deities of the aborigines enlarged the Aryan pantheon there seems to have arisen in the Aryan mind an urge for simplicity, for in the later hymns of the *Rig-Veda* polytheistic anthropomorphism seems to have been definitely questioned: "To what gods shall we offer an oblation?" asks the poet. The answer sometimes

is: "Varuna is the heaven, Varuna the earth, Varuna is the universe and all besides"; sometimes Brihaspati or Hiranyagarbha is the supreme, and a theism seems to be implied. At other times it is declared that the "real is One, the learned call it by different names," and we are sure that a strong pantheism prevails. These two conflicting tendencies run all through the *Rig-Veda*, although towards the end of it Varuna, as the ideal of theism, gives place to Indra, Krishna, and Mitra respectively, Brihaspati to Brahma the creator, and the belief in individual gods as alternatively the highest among the number of deities, which Max Müller called henotheism, replaces the earlier pantheism.

In the domain of philosophy, at first sight, the achievement of the Aryans would seem to be rather low. For man's questionings of nature, as reflected in such ejaculations as: "Where is the sun by night?" "Where go the stars by day?" "Why does not the sun fall down?" "Of the two, the night and the day, which is the earlier, which the later?" "Whence comes the mind, whither goes it?" etc., seem to be the naïve, simple questionings of a child as compared to the mature doctrines of *Karma* (the doing of good or bad deeds as governing birth and rebirth in *Samsara*, Universe), etc., of the Dravidians. But the postulation towards the end of the *Rig-Veda* of an Absolute Reality (God) as partaking of two ultimate entities, matter and soul, is, it must be recognised, a very great contribution indeed by the Aryans to the history of early speculative thought:

Non-being then existed not, nor being:
There was no air, nor heaven which is beyond it.
What motion was there? Where? By whom directed?
Was water there and fathomless abysses?

Death then existed not nor life immortal;
Of neither night nor day was any semblance.
The One breathed calm and windless by self-impulse:
There was not anything beyond it.

Darkness at first was covered by darkness;
This universe was indistinct and fluid.
The empty space that by the void was hidden,
That One was by the force of heat engendered.

Desire, then, at first arose within it,
Desire, which was the earliest seed of spirit.
The bond of Being, in Non-being sages
Discovered searchings in their hearts with wisdom.

Who knows it truly? Who can here declare it?
Whence was it born? Whence issued this creation?
And did the Gods appear with its production?
But, then, who knows from whence it has arisen?

This world-creation whence it has arisen,
Or whether it has been produced or not,
He who surveys it in the highest heaven,
He only knows it or even he does not know it.¹

The profound effect of the two strains of Vedic culture, the Aryan and the Dravidian, as they were fused together into a perfect whole by gradual stages, will become obvious as I trace the development of subsequent philosophy and religion. Meanwhile, let

¹ *Rig-Veda*, X. 129.

me proceed to notice the aesthetic implied in these two strains of India's ancient culture separately, as they were still more or less distinct and unmixed.

The Aryans as they descended upon India "were proficient in carpentry, building houses, and racing chariots of wood; and in metalwork, making vessels of *ayas*, presumably copper, for domestic and ritual use, and using gold jewellery. They wove, knew sowing and tanning, and made pottery. The early books afford no evidence of the making of images of any kind; on the other hand, it is impossible to suppose that the manufactures alluded to above were devoid of significant decoration. In all probability, the early art was decorative or more accurately abstract and symbolical."¹

It seems to me that this account of the arts of the Aryans fits in beautifully with the Vedic conception of beauty, implied in the word *Sri*, frequently used in the *Rig-Veda*, as primarily that of brilliance, splendour, and adornment of the work, or of wealth, success, and welfare of the worker.² The test of the artisan's work seems to have been how skilful it was. This was the ideal the poet had in mind when he compared his creation to the skilfully designed chariot of a clever carpenter, or to the beautifully woven cloth of an accomplished weaver, or to a bride adorned for her lover.

¹ Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 8.

² Oldenberg, "Vedic Words for Beautiful," etc., *Rupam*, No. 32, October 1927.

The Dravidians had, as we have seen, evolved cults of the phallus, and of mother goddesses (Yaksas and Nagas), and other naturespirits. They practised many of the arts, and also, perhaps, employed images in the worship of their cults. "Worshippers of the *Sisna* are mentioned with disapproval in the Vedas,"¹ and a "prehistoric symbol is illustrated by Foote."² The character of these images, if the Dravidians used them, must have been predominantly primitive, earthly, and natural. They must have been moulded in the simplest and the crudest shapes out of the very earth they stood upon, and stamped with all the qualities of natural power which surrounded Dravidian man. On this hypothesis of the primitive character of Dravidian art alone is later art to be explained. For if we acknowledge Aryan art to be abstract and symbolical in Stryzowski's sense, adopted by Dr. Coomaraswamy, the presumption that "Indian art and culture was a joint creation of the Dravidian and Aryan genius, a welding together of symbolic and representative, abstract and explicit language and thought,"³ follows as a matter of course.

(2)

During the period of the transition from the *Rig-Veda* to the Upanishads, through the *Sama-*, *Yajur-*, *Atharva-Vedas* and the *Brahmanas*, a gradual recon-

¹ Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 8.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

ciliation between the Aryan and the Dravidian cultures was going on. But it was a very slow process, the natural animosity of the white conqueror and the black conquered being still a handicap to intimate social intercourse, so that the Aryan quest for a monotheistic belief continued side by side with the Dravidian worship of many gods. In one respect, however, a noteworthy fusion was soon achieved. The simple ritual of the *Rig-Veda* had now, under the influence of Dravidian methods of worship, become an elaborate system of mechanical rites and ceremonies in the *Brahmanas*. The ideal of theosophy that was suggested in the subtle doctrine of the self-diremption of the Absolute into subject and object, soul and matter, in the hymn of creation, and the belief in One Supreme Cosmic Being whom the sages called in many ways, was expressly made the basis of a very definite psychology of religious ritual. The soul of nature was declared in the *Brahmanas* to be one with the soul of man, both being of the essence of the higher reality, the One Being. So the elements of the rite were identified with the elements of the Universe, the priest allying himself with Nature in all her moods, by making the syllables of the *mantras* (hymns or prayer verses) represent the seasons, the details of the sacrificial hearth signify the organs of the human body, the number of oblations denote the months. And in the lyrical spirit of that tender humanism which has coloured the flower of Hinduism from the earliest times to the present day, it was recognised that since our finite natures cannot with-

out difficulty conceive the infinite, the attempt should be made to comprehend its significance through the contemplation of its various symbolised aspects, although, of course, it was held that the "vulgar look for their gods in water, men of wider knowledge in celestial bodies; the ignorant in wood, bricks, or stones: but the wisest in the universal self."

It must be noted here, however, that the use of icons was no essential part of the priestly ritual of the Vedas, only symbols untouched by human craftsmanship being used during sacrificial and other ceremonies; and that though rude images of worship were used by the Dravidians, the art of sculpture was not yet a vehicle for the expression of spiritual ideas. We have to wait until the austere intellectualism of the Upanishads, Buddhism, and Jainism had given place to the warm theology of Hindu devotional cults in Epic times and later, to see the psychic currents of man's soul supply the mainsprings of artistic creation. Meanwhile, although Hinduism was in germ in the growth of devotional cults and of the caste system, the predominant preoccupation of men until the eighth century B.C. were the mental struggles of the dwellers in the forest—the sages of the Upanishads.

(3)

In the Upanishads the Aryans made their first constructive attempt to formulate a philosophy of life. They accepted the Dravidian doctrine of *Karma*

(deeds) as governing the nature of birth and rebirth in *Samsara* (the universe), and declared *Moksha* (release from the cycle of birth and rebirth realised through direct spiritual experience, brought about by contemplation) to be the goal of life.

The Upanishads are computed at a hundred and eight, but there are ten main ones on which later writers commented and from which all the different schools of Hindu thought have sought their sustenance. Professor Paul Deussen has arranged these in the following order:

1. Ancient Upanishads: *Brihadaranyaka*, *Chandogya*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Kaushitaki*, *Kena* (partly in prose).

2. Verse Upanishads: *Isa*, *Katha*, *Mundaka*, *Svetasvatara*.

3. Later prose: *Prasna* and *Maitrayani*.¹

The dates of their composition vary, but the oldest of them began to be written about 800 B.C. when the Vedic hymns were nearing completion and the latest was recorded about 500 B.C., when Buddhism arose.

It is impossible to disentangle the threads of ethical, religious, social, and metaphysical inquiries that are inextricably intermingled in the poetic-philosophic utterances that constitute the storehouse of learning of these Upanishads, but their general spirit may be described as the search for truth in life: "Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me

¹ *Philosophy of the Upanishads*.

from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality," prays the sage in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.¹

The character of the fundamental problem is postulated as any man might postulate it when he suddenly turns self-conscious: "Whence are we born, where do we live, and whither do we go?" asks the Upanishadic poet. And he attempts the solution of the problem in some such way as this:

At first he asks who he is himself, what he is, who and what is man. Upon reflection he finds that there are various selves of man; for instance: (1) the sensational self which feels; (2) the energetic self which acts; (3) the mental self which thinks; (4) the transcendental self which enjoys intuition. Of these it seems to him that the first three are less real than the fourth, because they are limited, because all the information that they give is only partially true, because all the judgments they enable us to make are made in terms of or in relation to other things, not about the thing as it really is; while the fourth self (that is the God-self) realised through intuition gives us absolute knowledge. But the first three selves are forms of the Absolute Higher Self (*Atman*, God), because the Higher Self, or God, expresses Himself through them, because they are His functions: "He [*Atman*, or God] is the person of the eye, the eye itself is the instrument of seeing. He who knows let me smell this, He is the Self, the nose is the instrument of smelling," etc.² The Higher self. *Atman*, God, is

¹ *Brh. Up.*, VIII. 12.

² *Ibid.*

Universal. "There is no second outside It, no other distinct term."¹

It cannot, however, be apprehended by the senses and defined in the terms of our ordinary, limited, human vocabulary: "The Soul which is not this and that, nor aught else, is intangible, for it cannot be laid hold of."² "It is unseen, transcendent, inapprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable, the sole essence of the consciousness of the Self, the completion of the World, the ever-peaceful, all-blissful, the one unit, this indeed is *Atman*."³

Having realised the nature of the Real Self as it is reflected in man, the philosopher turns to nature. What is nature? What is the reality behind the phenomenal universe? After analysis he finds that the very essence which is behind the three superficial forms of his mind is also behind the superficialities of nature. And as, in its subjective character, he called this essence *Atman*, so in its objective aspect he calls it *Brahman*. In a dialogue between a son and a father in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the mystery of *Brahman* is exposed by the father thus: "That from which beings are born, that in which when born they live, and that into which they enter at death, that is *Brahman*."⁴ After giving this definition, the father asks the son to think of the stuff which would fit into this conception. Whereupon the son first mistakes matter to be the *Brahman*. On failing to find an

¹ *Brh. Up.*, IV. 3. 23.

² *Chand. Up.*, VIII. 1. 3.

³ *Mundaka Up.*, I. 7.

⁴ *Taittiriya Up.*, III. 1.

explanation for the human mind on this hypothesis he declares the mind or intelligence itself to be the final Reality. Confronted, however, with the impossibility of explaining animal intelligence on the human mind principle, he fixes upon the senses which man and beast have in common and declares them to be the Ultimate Essence of all things. Even this is unsatisfactory, for it does not embrace intellectual ideas, of which we have distinct knowledge, apart from the senses, i.e. by the exercise of rational thought. But our intellect has already been proved to be limited. It is therefore resolved that the *Brahman* (Reality) is not comprehended by thought, but realised through intuition.

The essence of *Atman* (Self) and *Brahman* (Reality) when actually realised is called *Ananda* (the state of Pure Bliss). It is the unity (of God) in which the *Atman* (Self) becomes *Brahman* (Reality), and *Brahman* (Reality) becomes *Atman* (Self). It is the Omniscient,¹ Omnipresent,² Omnipotent,³ Ever-

¹ The *Atman-Brahman-Ananda* is similar in description to the God of the Bible, although, of course, the Upanishadic God is an abstract idea, while the Christian God was supposed to be incarnated in man. But it may be interesting to note the passages from the Bible about the qualities of God which are similar to the ones mentioned in the Upanishads. I quote the statement about God's omniscience first:

"All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13).

² "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. xix. 6).

³ "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 24).

lasting,¹ Timeless,² Changeless,³ Invisible,⁴ Incomprehensible,⁵ Supreme Spirit,⁶ immanent in *Atman* (man) and *Brahman* (nature),⁷ yet transcending all things.⁸ "As all spokes are contained in the axle, and in the fellyes of a wheel, thus also all beings and all gods, all worlds and all organs, also are contained in that Self (*Ananda*)."⁹ Logically it is indefinable because in the Supreme Soul all descriptions cease. Subject, object, ends, and causes, all fade away into the mystery of Divine ecstasy. All we can say about God is negative: "It is not this, It is not that"; the only positive assertion possible being the one which the mystic saint makes when he comes face to face with Him: "That art Thou."

Ananda, the Supreme Soul, "creates the world and enters it,"¹⁰ so that "the World is full of Him." "All shines after Him that shines. By His radiance is all

¹ "From Everlasting to Everlasting thou art God" (Psa. xc. 2).

² "The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity" (Isa. lvii. 15).

³ "For I the Lord change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6).

⁴ "For He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27).

⁵ "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job xi. 7).

⁶ "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24).

⁷ "One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. iv. 6).

⁸ "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (1 Kings viii. 27).

⁹ *Brh. Up.*, XI. 5. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV. 7.

this illumined."¹ And what is called *Maya*, the appearance or illusion of the phenomenal world, is nothing but the manifestation of His Person. The world is full of Him. Only it is full of Him qualitatively, not quantitatively, for in a physical way God is separate from humanity and from the world which humanity inhabits, separated by the duality that divides the manifest from His manifested forms. The ordinary world is the endless sea of life, in which the cycle of birth and rebirth keeps on revolving according to the automatic laws of *Karma* (deeds): "One becomes good through good deeds, evil through evil deeds," for "man is altogether desire; as is his desire so is his insight; as is his insight so is his deed; as is his deed so is his destiny."² If the human being by following the dictates of his better self acts himself out disinterestedly enough as a good man, all the influences which have gone to mould his character are then assimilated into a Perfect Self; then "as the flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, so a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the Divine Person who is beyond all,"³ thus attaining release or salvation in deathlessness.

The Vedic gods melted here into an abstract philo-

¹ *Mundaka Up.*, II. 2. 10.

² *Brh. Up.*, III. 2. 13. The Hindu order of morality is conceived in a slightly different manner from the Christian. According to the Hindus it does not matter to God whether men are good or bad because God is above all human considerations of morality.

³ *Mundaka*, III. 2. 8.

sophical Absolute. But there was one remarkable qualification attached to this philosophical Divinity. The Upanishads endorsed the emotional mystical method of *Yoga* (which the Aryans borrowed from the Dravidians, who originally practised it in ritualistic worship) as the way of realisation of this Absolute. The poet-philosophers were aware of the difficulties which beset the human mind in the task of God-realisation. If we are to apprehend Reality (God) correctly, we are enjoined, therefore, to cast off the veil of the lower self, that is to question all the feelings, desires, and thoughts which we have acquired. The acquirement of a clean, impersonal mind is a necessity for the seeker after truth, and *Yoga* (contemplation) is suggested as a method for the achievement of this end. Men should not depend over-much on worldly experience, and should intensify the inner self by deep meditation, so that there be "no difference left between what is within and what is without." Sometimes a rigid course of mental and physical discipline is inculcated to sharpen the inner faculties. For instance, in the *Prasna Upanishad* the sage Pippalda prescribes another year of discipline to six searchers after truth: "Go ye and spend another year in leading the life of celibacy, in practising asceticism, and in cherishing reverential faith." The *Katha Upanishad* says that God is realised "when the five sources of knowledge are at rest along with the mind and the intellect is active." It is also sometimes suggested that the *yogin* condition can be realised through the control

of breath.¹ The most common *Yoga* method enjoined in the Upanishads is, however, the strict control of passions and emotions and the fixture of attention on either mystic symbols or words such as *Aum*, *Tandavanam*, *Taggalam*, etc. "Having taken the bow furnished by the Upanishads, the great weapon, and fixed in it the arrow rendered pointed by constant meditation, and having drawn it with the mind fixed on the *Brahman* (Reality), aim, happy youth, at that mark, the immortal *Brahman*,"² the *Mundaka Upanishad* exhorts us. The blissful ecstasy of the union of the self with Self when realised is compared to the pleasure of earthly lovers in self-forgetful dalliance.

The endorsement of this *Yoga* method, however, did not imply the use of images in devotional worship in the manner in which the Dravidians practised it. The teaching of the Upanishads is rigid and austere, and expressly disapproves of ritualistic worship. The goal of life is release from the bondage of the senses and the attainment of the peace of the soul, the realisation of *Ananda*, the pure bliss of *Atman* (Higher Self) and *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality), and the way to this goal lies through the pure contemplation of spiritual Truth in *Sannyasa* (ascetic withdrawal from life).³

¹ *Brh. Up.*, I. 5. 23.

² *Mundaka Up.*, II. 2. 2.

³ The way in which the Upanishads preferred contemplation of truth in ascetic withdrawal from life has counterparts in Christian philosophy. For instance, St. Thomas says that "absolutely speaking and in itself the contemplative life is better than the active" (*Ethics*, X. 7, 8). St. Augustine recognised the same fact: "It is true," he said, "that the occupations of the active life sometimes turn us away from contemplation." Père Lallemant has

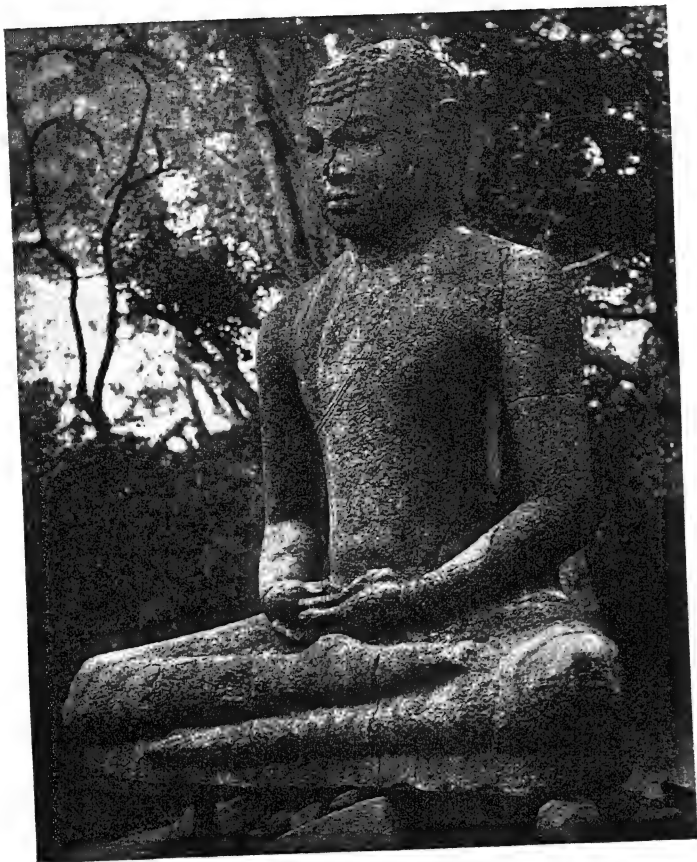


PLATE IV.—BUDDHA. ANURADHAPURA

By kind permission of Ananda Coomaraswamy

Art has thus no place in the Upanishadic scheme of life and is looked down upon as the source of sensual pleasure. But this does not mean that the arts were not practised in the Upanishadic Age. In fact, the naïve art practices of early Vedic times seem from the Upanishads to have definitely advanced. The knowledge of metals had developed. "Tin, lead, and silver are mentioned in the Upanishads, besides the *ayas* (iron or copper). Cotton, linen, silk, and woollen garments were worn; a linen robe used in the *Rajasuya* (coronation) ceremony was embroidered with representations of ritual vessels. Storied buildings are mentioned. Round and square huts, bricks, plates, cups, and spoons of gold and silver, iron knives, needles, mirrors, elevated bedsteads, thrones and seats, musical instruments, millstones, turbans (worn by the King in the *Rajasuya* ceremony and by students after graduation), crown, jewellery, earthenware, and a ship are mentioned in connection with rituals. Writing, no doubt of an early Brahmi character, must have been known in the eighth century B.C. or earlier,"¹ and the discovery of a nude female figure on a small repoussé gold plaque, representing, probably, the earth goddess at a site of Vedic burial mounds of the seventh or eighth century B.C., suggests that images of "fine written that "all that is necessary is the renunciation once for all of all our interests and satisfactions, all our designs and projects, so as to depend henceforth solely on the good pleasure of God" (*Spiritual Doctrine*).

¹ Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 9, 10.

workmanship"¹ had come to be used in worship. For the truth is that, commendable as the evolution of a metaphysical conception of the Absolute out of the Vedic pantheon may have been thought from the point of view of the higher religion of philosophy, it must have seemed rather too heavy for the human heart, used to the worship and adoration of the concrete shapes and forms of beneficent gods, to the fear and propitiation of the evil powers of dread daemons. So that although the lofty idealism that was conceived in the Upanishads passed like a dogma into the currency of everyday life in India, it passed not undiluted by the fanciful elaborations of the Dravidian and Vedic Aryan imagination which so well suited the demands of practical religion. We have seen how, during the period of the *Brahmanas*, the worship of many gods was going on side by side with the speculations about the One God. During Upanishadic times this practice continued. Meanwhile the development by the Aryans of the several religious cults which they borrowed from the Dravidians had been going on for some time, and Brahmanical theism, which in Epic and post-Epic times was to become the chief vehicle of Hindu thought, was in germ. The personal god of each devotional cult was already beginning to be assigned certain impersonal qualities and attributes in order that religious practice might be reconciled with popular belief on the one hand and with Upanishadic philosophy on the other.

¹ Codrington, *Ancient India*, pp. 7-8.

II

BUDDHISM

A PHILOSOPHY so subtle and divorced from life (from life as it is understood by the mass of ordinary men and women) as the Upanishadic was bound in time to evoke a reaction in favour of some more humanistic belief. Among the various revolts which thus inevitably sprang up, two were most important in the centuries before Christ—Buddhism and Jainism.

In order precisely to understand the significance for Hindu aesthetics of both these systems, it is essential to note that, since the age in which they were founded was marked by an increasing emphasis on the individual aspect of truth, the two religions became closely bound up with the lives of their authors. A biographical survey of both Gautama and Mahavira, therefore, automatically becomes an exposition of their respective religions.

Gautama "Buddha" (the Enlightened),¹ as he was called by his followers, born somewhere about 567 B.C., was heir to the royal house of the Sakyas, who ruled a small state in the Himalayas, situated between Nepal and Oudh, from their capital, Kapila-

¹ Throughout this survey of Buddhism I shall have in mind the *Lalita-Vistara* (a legendary life of the Buddha), illustrated in the reliefs of Borubudur and used by Sir Edwin Arnold as the basis for his beautiful poem, *The Light of Asia*.

vastu. His father's name was Suddhodana, and on his birth he was given the name of Siddhartha (one who has realised his ideal). His mother, Mayapati, died when he was barely seven days old, and he was brought up in the lap of an unusually kind step-mother. A prophecy was made when he was a child that he would either be a world conqueror or a great spiritual teacher, and as he early showed speculative leanings his father, fearing the actualisation of the second alternative suggested by the astrologers, summoned all the resources of his immense wealth to ensure him the delights of a splendid existence, and made of his each night and day a round of pleasure. He had as many as three palaces built for him, for use respectively in winter, summer, and the rainy season, and early married him to his lovely cousin, Yasodhara. It was decreed that when the Prince Siddhartha rode out in his chariot for recreation, no sign of misery and suffering should be allowed to meet his blissfully innocent gaze. But the artificiality of such a concocted scheme could hardly conceal the misery which is inseparable from life! As the Prince was driving to his pleasure-ground one day he saw an old man broken with age. On another occasion he saw a man suffering from a terrible disease. And still another time he came across a decomposed corpse, and he was filled with bitter remorse and cried out: "Shame then on life, since the decay of every living thing is notorious." Some time later he was struck by the calm and peaceful bearing of a monk, and resolved to live an ascetic's life, to renounce his

princedom, and thereby to secure a complete release from the trammels of existence. Having bathed in the river, he was mounting his chariot determined to go and ask his father's permission to turn ascetic when the news arrived that his wife, Yasodhara, had given birth to a son. Siddhartha was no doubt shaken in his new belief a little, and reflecting on the newborn infant, called him Rahula (Hindrance); but then with cool deliberation decided: "This is a new and strong tie I shall have to break." On reaching home he was, of course, greeted by the people of Kapilavastu with great enthusiasm as the happy father of an heir, but he paid no heed to the felicitous applause of the populace, and kept firm in his inner resolve to abdicate. That very night, as he lay uneasily awake, bored by the festivities around him, he was "roused into activity like a man who is told his house is on fire," and prepared to depart. Dreading that the strong guards whom his father had placed outside his palace would prevent his escape he called out to see who was at the gates. By a lucky coincidence, Channa, his sympathetic charioteer, kept guard that night, and called back in reply. Assured at least of the removal of one chief obstacle, Siddhartha ordered Channa to saddle his horse. Then, desiring to have a last look at his child, he gently opened Yasodhara's bedroom door. As he peeped in he saw that she was asleep with her arms around the child, and for a moment he stood torn between the desire to go and take up his child in his arms for the last time and the fear of disturbing the sleep of the

mother and the child. At length he persuaded himself with great difficulty to kill the desire and obey the fear, and consoling himself with the thought that he would come back to his home as soon as he became "Enlightened," not only as husband and father, but as teacher and saviour, he went out of the regal city which held all his potential worldly power, wealth, and love, into the solitude of the bordering forests with Channa as his only companion.

On reaching the banks of the river Anoma, Sidhartha cut off his beautiful, long, flowing locks of hair, cast off his ornaments, and assuming the mode of a *sannyasi* (ascetic), sent Channa with his horse and valuables back to Kapilavastu. For a week he rested under a mango grove, then walked on into the fastnesses of the Himalayas, visiting one hermitage after another, and learning the tenets of Hindu philosophy from Brahman poet-priests. Dissatisfied, however, with his spiritual progress, he sought a forest retreat in the Uravala range of the Himalayas, and gathering five disciples about him gave himself to the most rigorous austerities and self-torture. His fame as a prince ascetic spread "like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the skies." Greatly enfeebled physically, however, one day he swooned away and the people thought he was dead; but he rose, and feeling that the severity of his asceticism had brought him no nearer his goal he gave up renunciation and resumed the life of a wandering friar, visiting the neighbouring villages.

One day he saw an encouraging portent. Sujata, a herdsman's daughter, had brought him a golden cup filled with rice. He ate the rice and threw the bowl into the river that ran by. The vessel danced upwards against the current, a fact which Siddhartha interpreted as a good omen promising the attainment of his goal. That day he sat down under the Bo tree (the tree of wisdom), deep in meditation.

A dramatisation of his mental condition as he sat contemplating suggests the struggles he had to go through in order to realise his goal. Mara, the evil tempter, who had once appeared to him when he had just left home with a promise that he would give Siddhartha the kingdom of the four continents if the Prince would give up his quest, now appeared again and sought to unsettle him. He offered first to bring order into his father's kingdom, where his cousin Devadatta had risen in revolt against his father, but it was no temptation to Gautama, who believed rather in being good than in doing good. Mara and his demon hosts then inaugurated a storm of fire, stones, and the sand to torture him, but to the *Yogi* these seemed like a gentle rain of flowers. The tempter, frustrated in his design, laid claim to the seat which Gautama occupied, and asked his hosts to witness to his right, but the Prince touched the Earth and called her to witness to his right, which was at length proved. Infuriated by this, Mara made his last attempt. He sent his three daughters, Longing, Passion, and Desire, to tempt Gautama

with their beautiful forms, their soft music, and their accomplished dancing; but they had no effect on Siddhartha, devoted to his ideal. He was rewarded by a vision of perfection, and became the Buddha, the "Enlightened."

He immediately set off for Benares, where he hoped to proclaim his new discovery to his five old disciples, who he knew now lived in that city. On reaching there he unfolded the following philosophy of life to his friends: All corporeal things are material, and therefore doomed to destruction and dissolution. Since man lives in the world of matter, he suffers, decays, and dies. So long, therefore, as he does not renounce his unholy desires he will be continually subject to longing, weariness, and cares. It is fruitless to try to purify the body by mortification of the flesh and self-torture, for it is the moral evil that enslaves man in the cage of his body. The performance of good deeds does indeed procure man some material advantage as he moves in the cycle of birth and rebirth, but it is only by the complete eradication of all evil that we can hope to go to the "other side," to *Nirvana*, the final emancipation from birth and death. Four great truths should be observed by every aspirant to release: (1) misery always accompanies happiness in existence; (2) all modes of existence result from passion and desire; (3) the denial of desire is the only means of escape from existence; (4) complete freedom is achieved by the fourfold "paths," which are: (a) the awakening of hearts, signifying the mental stage when men and women realise that

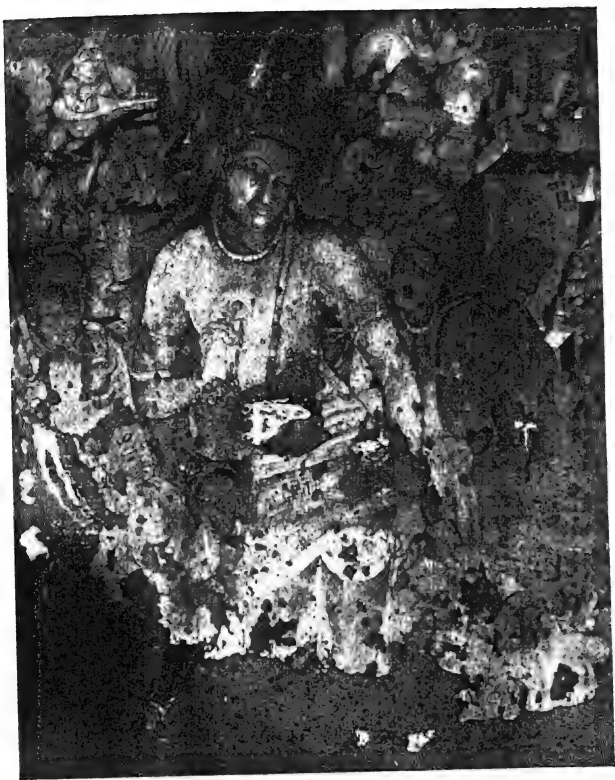
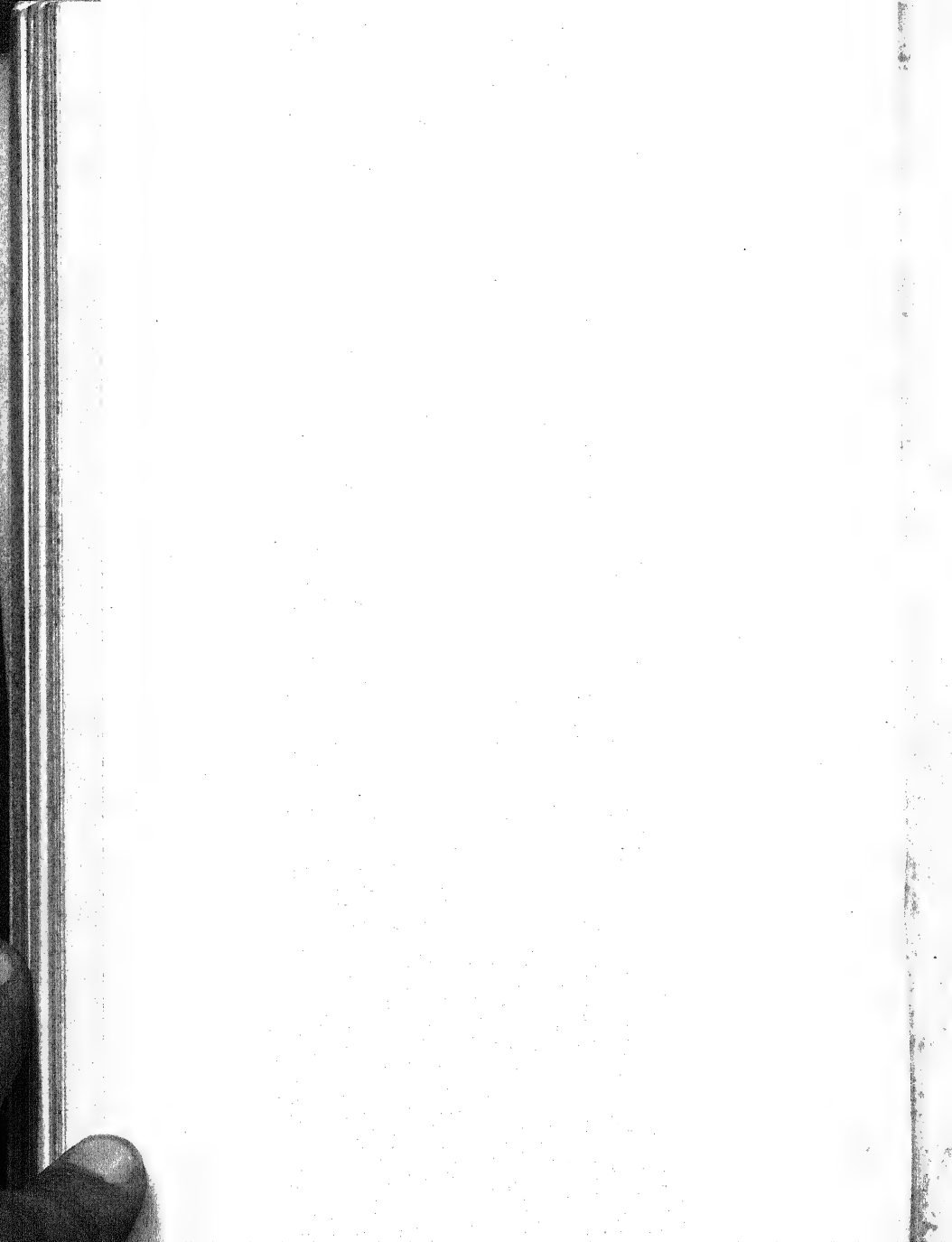


PLATE V.—AVALOKITESVARA. AJANTA. A.D. 600-650

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earthly occupations are inalienably suffused with sorrow; (b) the recognition by men of the fact that not only impure desires, but also revengeful feelings are to be got rid of; (c) to strive to free oneself from all evil desires, ignorance, doubt, heresy, unkindliness, vexation, etc.; (d) the final stage, *Nirvana*, may then be reached by the saint who has practised the first three "paths."

Having converted his five disciples and a number of other people at Benares, the Buddha dispatched them to go and proclaim the gospel of his faith in different parts of India, himself retiring to the village of Sena in the deserts of Uravala. Here at a seminary of philosophers and scholars he delivered his first sermon and converted many people to his religion, including the Brahmin sage Kashyapa, who became one of his most well-known devotees. Thence he went on to Rajagriha, where all Kashyapa's followers accepted Buddhism. Here he received a request from his father to come to Kapilavastu and he repaired thither and converted the royal family to his faith. Rahula, his son, became a monk, and Yasodhara was admitted to the order of nuns.

In the twentieth year of his "enlightenment," his cousin Ananda joined him, and was his devoted companion through life, and successor at his death, which occurred in the eightieth year of his life, in 487 B.C., at Kusinagara, a town about 120 miles north-east of Benares.

Almost the last words the Buddha uttered to his disciple Ananda, who had shown signs of personal

distress at the loss that was threatened to him by the master's death, were:

Therefore, O Ananda, be ye a lamp unto yourself. Be ye a refuge to yourself. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp.

The austere ideal implied in this injunction continued to dominate early Buddhism, and a vague sort of ban lay on all art, which was considered as motivated by the ideal of mere ephemeral pleasure. The psychological attitude of early Buddhist aesthetics is clearly summed up in the *Vissuddhi Magga*: "Living beings, on account of their love and devotion to the sensations excited by forms and the objects of sense, give high honour to painters, musicians, perfumers, cooks, and elixir-prescribing physicians, and other like persons who furnish us with objects of sense." "Beauty is nothing to me," says the *Dasa Dhamma Sutta*, "neither the beauty of the body, nor that which comes of dress," and it enjoins: "form, sound, taste, smell, touch, these intoxicate beings; cut off the yearning which is inherent in them."

The stringency of this view is hardly to be wondered at, if we consider that art at this time was motivated by the vaporous emotions of pleasure-loving people. This was an age predominantly of gay and splendid living. The seductive charms of lovely women, "adorned, garlanded, and redolent of sandalwood," are a favourite theme of the refined connoisseurs of Buddhist literature, and even "the dry, hieratic prose of the texts of sermons which enumerate the impressions of beauty, (collect)

together scores of synonyms, all of which express the sense of pleasure."¹

Thus the monks of the brotherhood were expressly forbidden to paint pictures on the walls of the monasteries, symbols of wreaths, and creepers in stupas, which were enjoined by the Buddha for worship,² alone being allowed as aids to meditation. Only four chief events in the life of the Buddha were illustrated in early Buddhist art: (1) the conception, nativity, or the great renunciation, i.e. the going forth of the Buddha from Kapilavastu, symbolised by elephant, lotus, bull, gate, horse, respectively; (2) the Great Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, represented by the Bodhi tree with rail; (3) the first sermon at Sarnath, shown by wheel or deer; and (4) the final release, *Nirvana*, at Kusinagara, symbolised by the stupa. It is probable, however, that all the places which were in any way connected with the Buddha soon became places of pilgrimage, and "it is most likely that the very beginnings of Buddhist art are to be recognised in formal stamped symbols, or tokens carried away by pilgrims as memorials of their visits to the sacred sites."³

The passage of time, however, dulled the enthu-

¹ Oldenberg, "Vedic Words for Beautiful," etc., *Rupam*, No. 32, October 1927.

² See Ram Prashad Chanda, "The Beginnings of Art in Eastern India," *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*. Also Coomaraswamy, *Yaksas*.

³ Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of Indian Collections*, Parts I and II, Boston. See also Foncher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*.

siasm of the Buddhists for the monasticism implied in the earlier ideal of passionless search for truth. Buddhism no longer remained a code of ethics the first century after its proclamation, but became a popular religious system, and it was profoundly influenced by Brahmanical theism, which had made great strides forward from its inception in the Vedic period to the end of the Epic period. The ritual of the Gnostic Brahmins could not but have appealed to the large mass of lay Buddhists forced into a sort of agnosticism by the abstruse doctrines of their clergy. The Hindu psychological truth prevailed that the human adorer wants something concrete through which to adore, rather than to explore the void of metaphysical subtleties. On the model of the Brahmanical pantheon was developed a vast pantheon of the *Mahayana* (greater vehicle) Buddhism, as against the *Hinayana* (lesser vehicle) Buddhism. Buddha, who had always regarded himself as one in a long line of Boddhisatvas (potentially capable of becoming Buddhas), was worshipped as a manifestation of Infinite Light. He was the Adi- (supreme) Buddha, corresponding to the Hindu Ishvara, or Brahma the creator; the One who had split Himself into the many when the desire of *prajna* (divine wisdom) arose within Him, and who, in the event of realising *prajna*, became manifest in the universe in the forms of the five Dhyani-Buddhas—Vairocana, Akshobya, Ratna-Sambhava, Amitabha, and Amogha-Siddha. From each of these Dhyani-Buddhas had proceeded five Dhyani-Boddhisatvas—Samanta-

Bhadra, Vajra-pani, Ratna-pani, Padma-pani, and Visva-pani, who all helped in the process of the evolution of the universe and its maintenance. One of the Dhyani-Bodhisattvas, Padma-pani, was called Avalokitesvara, and worshipped just like the god Vishnu of Vaishnava Hinduism as creator and preserver.

In the second and third centuries B.C. the members of this elaborate pantheon came to be illustrated through the use of icons and images in the same way as the gods of the Hindu pantheon had probably been illustrated towards the end of Vedic times, and Buddhist art sought succour from the doctrines of *bhakti* (devotional worship) in order to secure redemption, just as the art of Hindu devotional cults sought inspiration from *bhakti* (love and devotion) to secure *Yoga* (union with God).

Mahayana Buddhism had conceived a great admiration for the ideal of *Yoga*, which had now been codified as a system by Patanjali, and as Buddha had been known to have practised it, and to have realised "Enlightenment" through it, Buddhist artists seeking to express the popular devotion to Buddha as the Divine ideal always presented him as seated in the *Yogi* attitude so beautifully described in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

"Abiding alone in a secret place, without craving and without possession, he shall take his seat upon a firm seat, neither over-high nor over-low, and with the workings of the mind and of the senses held in check, with body, head, neck maintained in perfect

equipoise, looking not round about him, so let him meditate, and thereby reach the peace of the abyss: and the likeness of one such, who knows the boundless joy that lies beyond the senses and is grasped by intuition, and who swerves not from truth, is that of a lamp in a windless place which flickers not."

The acceptance of this boundless sense of God, and the recognition of the lyrical limitations of men implied in the evolution of a devotional pantheon, naturally softened the puritanism of early Buddhist aesthetics into a delicate religious romanticism. The theory of beauty which is for ever associated with what we possess of the monuments of Buddhist art is, therefore, hardly to be distinguished from the idealistic art-philosophy of Hinduism.

III

JAINISM

JAINISM, the other most important system of religious ethics that arose in reaction to the logic of the Upanishads, takes its name from the title given to its founder, the *Jina* (the Victor), just as Buddhism takes its from *Buddha* the "Enlightened."

Vardhamana, the scion of a Kushatriya princely family which ruled in some part of Magadha, the modern Bihar, was born in the year 599 B.C. According to Jacobi, the famous German orientalist, who is the greatest authority on the history of this sect, "Vardhamana seems to have lived in the house of his parents till they died, and his elder brother Nandivardhana succeeded to what principality they had. Then at the age of twenty-eight he, with the consent of those in power, chose the spiritual career, which in India as the Church in Western countries seems to have offered a field for the ambition of younger sons. For twelve years he led a life of austerities, visiting even the wild tribes of the country called Radha. After the first year he went naked. From the end of these twelve years of preparatory self-mortification dates Vardhamana's *Kevalship* (adeptship). Thereafter he was recognised as Omniscient as a prophet of the Jainas or a *Tirthankara* (the founder of the path), and had the titles *Jina* (spiritual conqueror), *Mahavira* (great hero), etc., which were

also given to Sakyamuni (Gautama Buddha). The last thirty years of his life he passed in teaching his religious system, and organising his order of ascetics, which . . . was patronised, or at least countenanced, chiefly by those princes with whom he was related through his mother."¹

Just as Buddha recognised himself as one in a long line of Buddhas, so Jina considered himself to be in direct succession to twenty-three other Jinas or Tirthankaras. So that he was not really the originator of the system he inaugurated, but merely the last prophet who carried existing Jaina doctrines to their logical conclusions.

The Jains are divided into two main sub-sects, the *Digambaras* (clothed with the sky), who go about naked, and the *Svetambaras* (clothed in white), who wear white garments. Starting from the Dravidian doctrine of *Karma* and *Samsara*, as developed in the Upanishads, the Jainas fixed their goal in *Nirvana*, or *Moksha* (release), which unlike the Buddhists they interpreted to be the delivery of the soul from birth and rebirth in the body in which it is clothed, and unlike the Hindus to be no absorption of the soul into the Deity, but its fusion with some metaphysical entity, of which the nature is indefinable. Four virtues are recognised as essential for the attainment of this goal—liberality, gentleness, piety, and remorse for failings—and these might be practised through the jewel-like means of right knowledge, right faith, and right walk (deed), and by the

¹ *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXII, Introduction, p. xv.

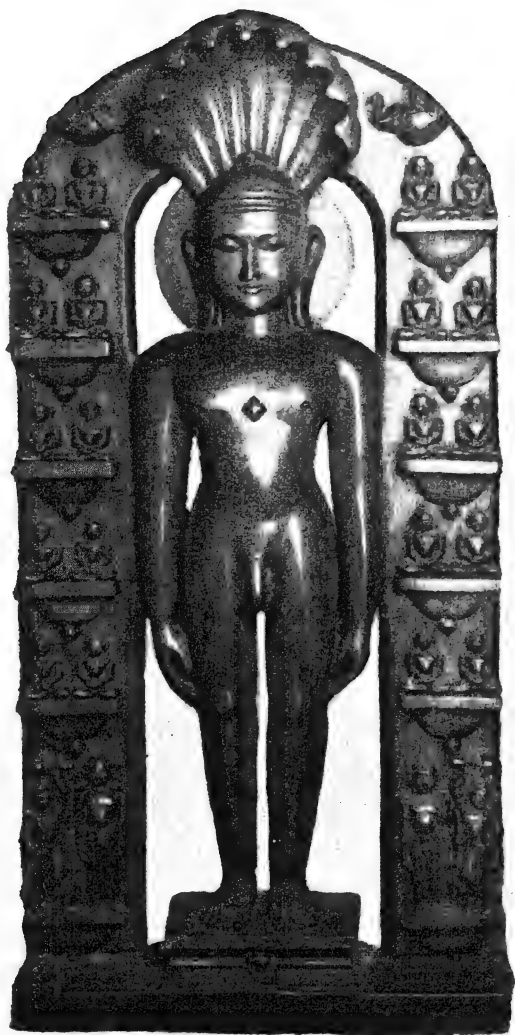
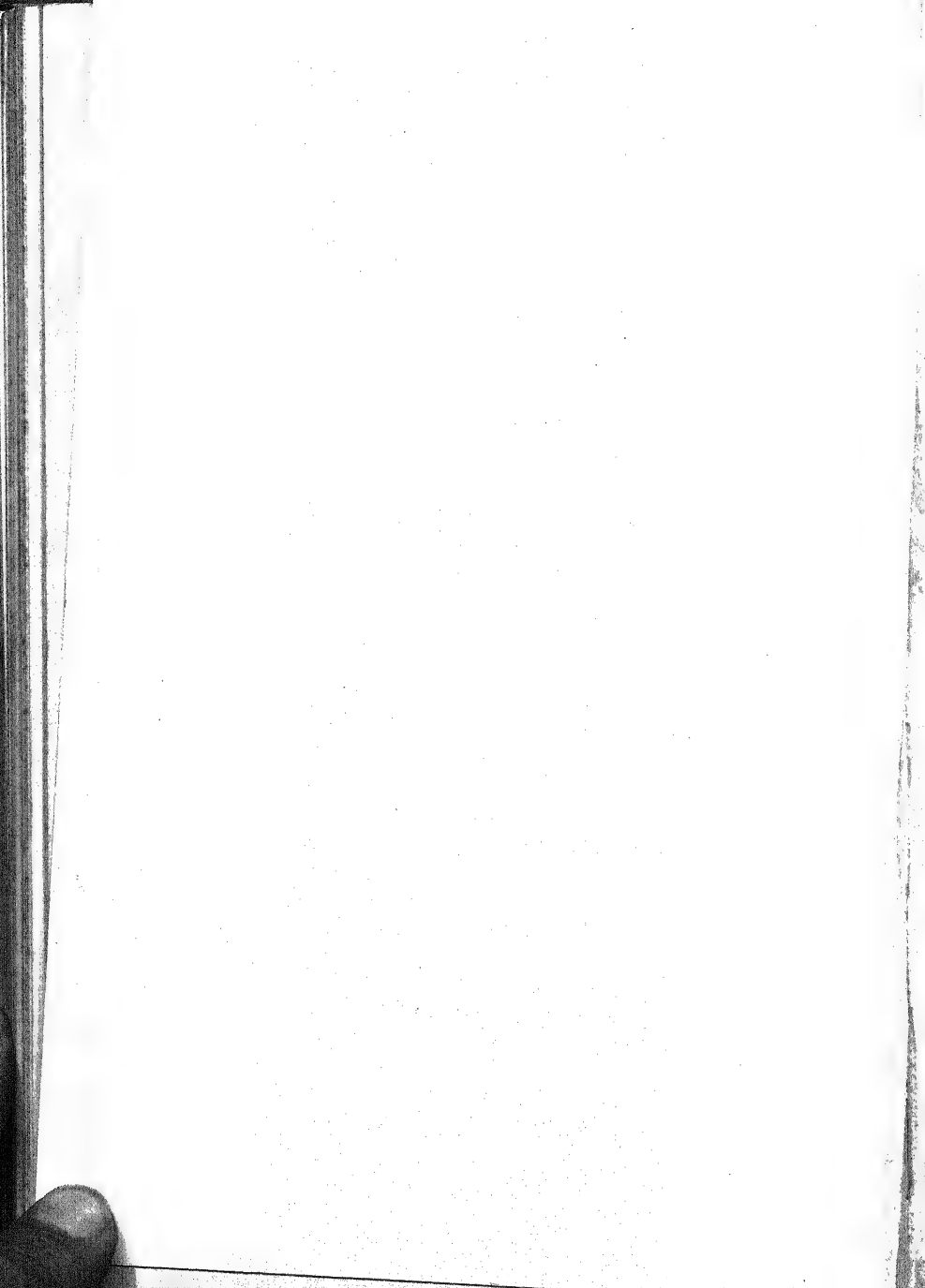


PLATE VI.—JINA

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exercise of kindness to all objects, whether animate or inanimate. This last concept is much more stressed in Jainism than it is in Hinduism and Buddhism (of which religions, too, it formed a cardinal doctrine), probably because the Jains consider every object to be endowed with a soul.

In its earlier stages, the ideal of asceticism which Mahavira had emphasised came to be illustrated in art through the rather cold, rigid, and feelingless figure sculptures of Mahavira himself and the other Tirthankaras. Later developments of the Jaina doctrine, however, tended to relax the rigidity of the conventions imposed by Mahavira, and almost all the gods of the Hindu pantheon were included in the system as the object of *bhakti* (devotional worship). The sanctity of the Vedas was recognised and caste was generally conformed to.

It was in the spirit of this later absorption of Brahmanical devotionalism that the rich Jain laity, who, though not actively working for *Nirvana*, were yet supposed to be walking on the path to it, built those magnificent monuments at Mount Abu and on the sacred hills of Palitana and Girnar, where the Jain clergy lived a monastic existence. Thus, though early Jaina aesthetics was puritanical in the face of popular hedonism in the same way as the aesthetics of primitive Buddhism, it, too, could not resist the influence of that fervent devotionalism and mystic worship of an ideal God through recourse to a humanised art which is the crowning glory of Hinduism.

IV

THE EPICS

No period in the chequered history of India has been so rich in mental activity as the three thousand years or so which marked the Aryanisation of its vast distances. For not only during this period were the foundations laid of all subsequent Hindu culture in the revelation of the Veda, the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, but the epopees, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, were written. With all the exalted grace and nobility of their imaginative descriptive poetry, the two epics tell the story of these three or four thousand years of Indian civilisation—crystallise for us the essence of those remarkable forces, spiritual and physical, which stirred the soul of Aryan man during the process of his distillation into the farthest corners of India and his assimilation of Non-Aryan ideas into the unified system of belief which has come to be known as Hinduism.

The Epics must have been sung in their ballad form between 1000 and 500 B.C. Their composition extended from the last date to about the fifth century A.D. In their earlier portions, three systems or cults of devotional theism around the three gods Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma appear. In the worship of the icons of these and other cult deities during a long period devotional art grew to maturity. From references to the images of Siva, Skanda, Vasu-

deva, etc., by Patanjali, it may be concluded that art had now come to be used as a vehicle for the expression of the fundamental truths of religion and philosophy.

We must not look to the Epics, however, for any defined system of religion or philosophy. They are mainly collections of the myths and legends of Hindustan of ancient times strung together on the thread of the purest of pure poetry. We may, however, glean from their pages some ideas of which the implications are important for our purpose.

The *Ramayana* is a poem of about 48,000 verses of a very high literary value. It is the work of a single author, Valmiki. It was probably written earlier than its sister epic the *Mahabharata*. The story of it is that Dasaratha, King of Kosala, with his capital at Ayodhya (modern Oudh), had four sons: Rama, by his chief wife Kaushalya; Bharata, by his favourite Kaikeyi; Lakshmana and Strughana, by Sumitra. Rama, the hero of the poem, wins the hand of Sita, daughter of King Janaka of Videya, by bending a huge bow, and is about to be declared heir-apparent on his return to Ayodhya when the intriguing women of the palace conspire against him. Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharata, in a mood of jealousy induces Dasaratha to exile Rama, and to appoint her own son successor to the throne. Forced to banish his eldest son, the king dies of grief. Bharata, being very devoted to his elder brother, refuses to take up the reins of govern-

ment, and proceeds to the Chitrakuta forest, where Rama is in exile, and requests him to return. On Rama's stern refusal to break the terms of his promise to his father, Bharata returns to Ayodhya, and placing his brother's sandals on the throne rules as his Viceroy.

Meanwhile, during Rama's wanderings in the Vindhya-chal mountains a female daemon becomes infatuated with him, and on the rejection of her advances incites her brother Ravana, the daemon King of Lanka (Ceylon), to decoy Sita. Ravana comes disguised as a hermit, and having ingeniously secured the absence of the princes, carries Sita away to Ceylon. Rama and Lakshmana search for her, and having received information of her whereabouts, march with a huge army led by the monkey general, Hanuman, against the enemy. After a prolonged battle Rama conquers, and, killing Ravana in single combat, triumphantly returns to take up the sovereignty of his father's kingdom.

Although, however, Sita's purity has been tested by the ordeal of fire, there still lurk in Rama's mind vague misgivings. One day on seeing a sketch of Ravana which Sita had drawn to give an impression of her evil abductor to her friends, he exiles her. She goes into the forests and lives at the hermitage of the poet Valmiki, the author of the *Ramayana* himself, and is here delivered of two sons, Lava and Kusa. The sage trains them in soldiery, and imparts to them the knowledge of the Veda and the *Ramayana*. One day they wander into Ayodhya,

and are recognised by Rama, who reclaims them and their mother back.

Apart from certain references to architecture, painting, and sculpture, and an account of how the sage Valmiki employed the method of *Yoga* (meditation) in order to write the epic, there is not much of aesthetic import in the *Ramayana*. The references to actual works of art are hardly historical, and are besides of little concern here. The employment of *Yoga* as a method of contemplation, on the theme which the artist seeks to elaborate technically, may well be considered along with the theories on that subject suggested in the *Mahabharata*.

The *Mahabharata* is a long narrative of fact and fiction of about 100,000 stanzas. The authorship of the work is appropriately ascribed to Vyasa (the collector), who may be supposed to have edited the vast mass of folk tales and legends about "the fifth century B.C." The main event is the struggle between two historical Aryan clans, the Kurus and the Pandus, for supremacy, eventually decided by a bloody battle on the plains of Kurukshetra.

In Hastinapura, the ancient Delhi, two descendants of the King Bharata of the lunar race, Dhritarashtra and Pandu, claimed succession to the throne. The former being blind, the latter ascended the throne. Some time later, however, Pandu, being a leper, retired in favour of his elder brother, and betook himself to the forests. On his death, his five sons, Yudhisthira, Bhima, and Arjuna, by his wife Kunti, Nakula and Sahadeva, twins by Madri, came

to Hastinapura, and were welcomed by their uncle, the old king, who made provisions for their education in the arts of war and peace. Dhritarashtra himself had a hundred sons, of whom the eldest was Duryodhana. Rivalry soon sprang up among the cousins, because the five sons of Pandu were superior in physical and mental skill, and had won the favour of their uncle. Duryodhana, who was the heir-apparent to the throne, induced his father to send them away to live out of Court for some time at a place where he had laid a plot to destroy them. Luckily, the Pandus escaped from the disaster which their cousin had designed for them, and lived in exile for some time. During their wanderings, Arjuna won the hand of Draupadi, daughter of King Draupada, in an open contest, and made her the common wife of himself and his brothers. While the *svayamvara* (the choice of a bridegroom) was going on they came across the god-prince Krishna of Dwarka, their cousin through their mother's sister, and made him their faithful friend and instructor.

Dhritarashtra, hearing of the Pandus' glorious success, recalled them to Hastinapura, and divided the kingdom into two equal portions between his own sons and them, so that the families might live in amity and friendship with each other. For some time peace did, indeed, prevail between the cousins. Then one day Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandus, lost everything to Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kurus, at a game of dice, and it was agreed that he and his brothers should proceed again to exile

for twelve years, after which they could come back and reclaim their heritage, if they spent an additional year in successful disguise.

The Pandus spent the prescribed twelve years in the jungles, adventuring into fresh fields and acquiring new knowledge, and then entered the employ of King Virata of Matsya in disguise. Everything went well, and they were about to return to the capital when an unexpected incident occurred. Kichaka, the brother of Matsya's queen, became enamoured of Draupadi, and was slain by Bhima. Duryodhana the Kuru, taking advantage of the temporary bitterness that had ensued in Matsya's kingdom following that incident, invaded the territories with a large army. The Pandus, still loyal to their employer, in spite of his brother's outrage, espoused his cause, and the long war began of which the final scene enacted in the plains of Kurukshetra ended in the routing of the imperial armies by the Pandu hosts, and the slaughter of the Kurus to a man. Dhritarashtra, having resigned the kingship, retired to the forests. Yudhishthira became king and ruled prosperously for some time, till he and his brothers, tired, too, of the world, resigned their high offices, and leaving a descendant of their own and of the Kurus to rule in Hastinapura, set off to Mount Meru to enter the heaven of Indra, with Draupadi and a dog. On their way, however, all the others fell dead as being sinners or offenders against heavenly laws in some form or another except Yudhishthira, who,

accompanied by his faithful dog, reached the gates of heaven. Here he was asked to abandon the dog if he wanted to enter heaven, but his sense of loyalty was shocked, and he refused to go in. The dog was in reality an incarnation of Justice and had sought to test Yudhishthira's constancy, so he was admitted. On entering heaven, however, he was told that Draupadi and his four brothers were suffering the tortures of hell, upon which he refused to stay in the celestial place without them. But even this turned out to be a test imposed by the gods, and he was joined by his brothers and Draupadi to live in perpetual bliss ever afterwards.

The story of the *Mahabharata* may be regarded as a history of creation—a history of “man in his evolutionary development.” “Looking at it from the theosophical point of view, the King Dhritarashtra is the human body which is acquired by the immortal monad (the Absolute) in order to go through the evolutionary journey; the mortal envelope is brought into existence by *Tanha*, or thirst for life (desire). He is blind because the body without the mind is merely senseless matter, and thus is incapacitated for governing, and some other person is represented in the *Mahabharata* as being the governor of the state, the nominal king being the body, Dhritarashtra. As the theosophical scheme holds that there is a double line of evolution within us, we find that the Kurus spoken of in the poem represent the more material side of those two lines, and the Pandava princes, of whom Arjuna is one,

stand for the spiritual side of the stream, that is Arjuna represents the immortal side.

"The long wanderings and the varied hardships of the Pandus are wanderings caused by the necessities of evolution before their better parts are able to make a stand for the purpose of gaining control in man's evolutionary struggle. This also has reference to the cyclic rise and fall of nations and the race.

"The hostile armies, then, who meet on the plains of the Kurus, are these two collections of the human faculties and powers, those on the one side tending to drag us down, those on the other aspiring towards spiritual illumination. The battle refers not only to the great warfare that mankind as a whole carries on, but also to the struggle which is inevitable as soon as any individual in the human family allows his higher nature to govern him in his life."¹

The essence of the spirit that pervades the universe is concretised in the *Mahabharata*, sometimes in the person of the god Krishna, at others in Krishna as the *logos*, or the Divine Word, the Universal Soul.² The theism and the pantheism implied in these alternate treatments is best brought out in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The ingenious anonymous author of this little treatise seized upon the opening of the battle between the Kurus and the Pandus, and

¹ W. Q. Judge, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Introduction.

² Here, then, the bridge between the Upanishadic God and the God of the Bible is made. The historical Jesus may be considered as a counterpart of the incarnate Krishna.

showing Arjuna, the Pandu prince, overcome with remorse at the idea of warring with his cousins, developed a dialogue between him and the god Krishna, his charioteer, on the true nature of action and thought in relation to the Divine Life.

Krishna, as the Universal Soul, gives a definition of his nature, which is really an echo of the Upanishadic definition of the Absolute developed from the hymn of creation, and reconciled with the idea of God as incarnated in the world! "I am the origin of all,"¹ "I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself and remain separate."² Further, he declares that he is the essence of both the *brahman* and the *atman*. "I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all existing things." The realisation of his nature is, he says, very difficult: "Exceeding great is the toil of those whose minds is attached to the Unshown; for the Unshown way is painfully won by those that wear the body." So he makes a concession to the mortal nature of men. "But as for them, who, having cast all works on Me and given themselves over to Me, worship Me in meditation, with whole-hearted *Yoga*, these

¹ "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1).

"The God that made the world and all things therein . . . made of one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth . . . that they might seek God, if haply they might seek after Him and find Him" (Acts xvii. 24, 26, 27).

² "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is" (Luke x. 22).

speedily I lift up from the sea of death and life, O Partha, their minds being set on Me."¹

Hence the personal idea of the god Krishna finds a place quite consistently with the theosophic idea. In this respect, however, as in regard to the impersonal ideal, it must be mentioned that the author of the *Gita* only developed existing ideas to their logical conclusions. For Krishna, as a theistic god, traces his history to the *Rig-Veda*. There, it might be recalled, was mentioned a deity, Vishnu, embodying the power of the Sun. During the transition to the Upanishads this Vishnu had become one of the most important gods of popular fancy as signifying the conception of the Blessed Cosmic Spirit and sacrificing itself for the world. He was sometimes worshipped as *Purusha*, the sacrificed giant, the source of all life, or *Purushottama* (the male Supreme). Later he became the god Hari, or Narayana, the omnipotent principle or essence of life, the Supreme Self as the individual Self, and the idea of *bhakti* (devotion) as the ecstatic worship of the Divine Being, through ritual and meditation, became attached to him. Among the various incarnations of Vishnu that were evolved by minor cults, Krishna, an aboriginal cowherd god, was at one time declared as the most important by the Aryans, now anxiously ennobling each new member of their enlarged pantheon in turn. In the earliest portion of the *Mahabharata*, Krishna is simply a demi-god,

¹ "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28).

but towards the end he has risen to be the Supreme, and has almost become the hero of the poem in the person of Yadva, Prince Vasudeva of Dwarka, cousin, adviser, and friend of the Pandus, and several elaborate cults such as the Vishnuite Bhagvatas and the Panchratras have grown up around him.

As the Supreme God, Krishna dictates the doctrine that each man has a *dharma* (duty), and he must as a member of the four castes observe the principles of social and religious *karma* (obligations) prescribed for him. The true end of man is "to save his soul" by attaining *Yoga*, the union of his conditioned self with the Unconditioned. The way to this union lies through knowledge of the distinction between the self and the not-self, *Ishvara* and *Maya* (soul and matter), and through the exercise of *bhakti* (devotional worship).

The significance of the basic ideas of the *Mahabharata* and its masterly appendix, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, for aesthetics can never be too greatly exaggerated. Culled from the vast literature of the ages which had gone before them they contained the essence of all that was most valuable of the philosophy of good and evil in that literature, in a form which, though allegorical, was refined enough to be available for immediate use, and to be the basis for the systematising edifications of the generations that were to follow. It was the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* which, by their express recognition of the philosophical Absolute as taking the form

of Vasudeva Krishna, for the first time authorised and rendered universal the worship of a theistic ideal which had by the necessity of human finitude been unofficially in force for nearly two thousand years. It was here, too, that the view was plainly set out which had been so far implicitly understood, that the Ultimate ideal which is impersonal from the point of view of philosophy, and personal from the point of view of religion, is expressional from the point of view of art. "I am the splendour of splendid things," said Sri-Krishna, the personification of the Upanishadic *Atman-Brahman-Ananda*, and the Ishvara of devotional theism. And just as all the qualities of our experience are traceable to the very same ideal, so, too, beauty, for he says: "Whatsoever is beautiful . . . understand thou that to go forth from a fragment of my splendour."

Alongside of this definition of the ideal of aesthetics must be emphasised the two methods enjoined for its realisation, which originated in Vedic times and were resuscitated in the Epics and the *Bhagavad-Gita—bhakti* and *Yoga*.

The doctrine of *bhakti* is implied in the very fact of the position of a personal god in the *Mahabharata*, for the idea of a beloved in whom we rest our faith, and in whose charity we fix our hopes, involves that of a devoted lover and believer. It must not, however, be understood as the devotion to God exercised with a view to gaining earthly ends. The *Bhagavad-Gita* insists that the feeling of deep love for God ought always to be performed as a *dharma*—disin-

terested, dispassionate—action. It is only a method to reach the Infinite Bosom of the Unshown, for “the Unshown way is painfully won by those that wear the body.” “All those who turn to Me, be they even women, traders, serfs, or doers of evil, and much more so Brahmans and anchorites,” “these speedily I lift up from the sea of life and death, their minds being set on Me.”

There are two modes of *Yoga*, as it should be employed in the service of Vasudeva Krishna, says the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The first is exercised through *sannyasa*, the casting off or renunciation of all religious and social ties, in order to engage in solitary meditation on the distinction between the self and the Not-self, soul and matter. This is of necessity a very difficult task and performable only by the most devoted adepts. The second method, which is much easier to follow, involves (1) *Kriya-Yoga*, by which the devotee discharges all the religious and social duties of life without any expectation of reward for his labours other than that he should become a *yogin*, “a man of established intelligence,” and thus be able to practise *Samadhi*, or the loving contemplation of himself in union with the Supreme, whereby he is to rise “beyond the moods” to the “Brahmic state of Bliss.”

According as the second of these two paths is easier and within the reach of every man and woman, it is recommended to the man of the world, and although theoretically and even practically it has been subordinated to the path of knowledge

by renunciation, the vast majority of Hindus through their thousand years of history have practised it, and left the first to the few who having lived lives of the highest *karma* (deeds) are ready to make the final leap into the ocean of *Nirvana*.

Although the precise details of the history of the ideas of the Epic age are not available, it may be conjectured that they dominated not only the theoretical side of life, but also largely entered into practice, for side by side with the scheme of life, of which they were a part, there was all the time a vigorous religious practice going on in Buddhist monasteries and Brahmanical temples. The crystallisation of theoretical idealism and practical theism had become perfect, and all the arts were fired with a great enthusiasm. The practising artists were dominated by the twin conception of *bhakti* and *Yoga*, and employed them as aids in the execution of their work in the same way as they were used by ordinary worshippers. The view that their work was dedicated to the ideal of their professed religion infused the artists with a sense of passionate devotion to their theme, and the method of *Yoga* was employed to concentrate attention on the elusive abstract conceptions of the Supreme Deity in order to translate His various qualities into concrete forms.

That *Yoga*, for instance, was employed in the service of art, and how it was employed, is obvious from an account we have left to us of the sage Valmiki's method in writing the epic *Ramayana*. "Seating himself with his face towards the East,

and sipping water according to the rule, he set himself to *Yoga* (contemplation) of his theme. By virtue of his *Yoga*-power he saw clearly before him Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita, and Dasaratha, together with his wives, in his kingdom, laughing, talking, acting, and moving as in real life . . . by *Yoga*-power that righteous one beheld all that was to come to pass in the future, like a *nelli* fruit (*phyllanthus emblica*, denoting clear insight) on the palm of his hand. And having truly seen by virtue of his concentration, the generous sage began the setting forth of the history of Rama."¹ The *Ramayana* gives, indeed, various other uses to which *Yoga* was put in the Epic period. For instance, Hanuman, the monkey general who helped Rama to search for Sita, is said to have "prayed to the Gods and ranged the forests in imagination till he found her."²

From all this it is obvious that in theory as well as in practice art was considered as a polarisation through means of which we touch the innermost depths of our nature, so that we may lift ourselves to a state of calm and lucid exaltation and be face to face with Reality. The Upanishadic view that God is immanent in the universe, that we are perpetually in the presence of God and yet removed from Him by the thick veil of the senses, was acknowledged, and it was urged that the practice of loving contemplation would gradually disclose to us the inner life of things. A doctrine such as this, which insists on the vitalising power of religious devotion as

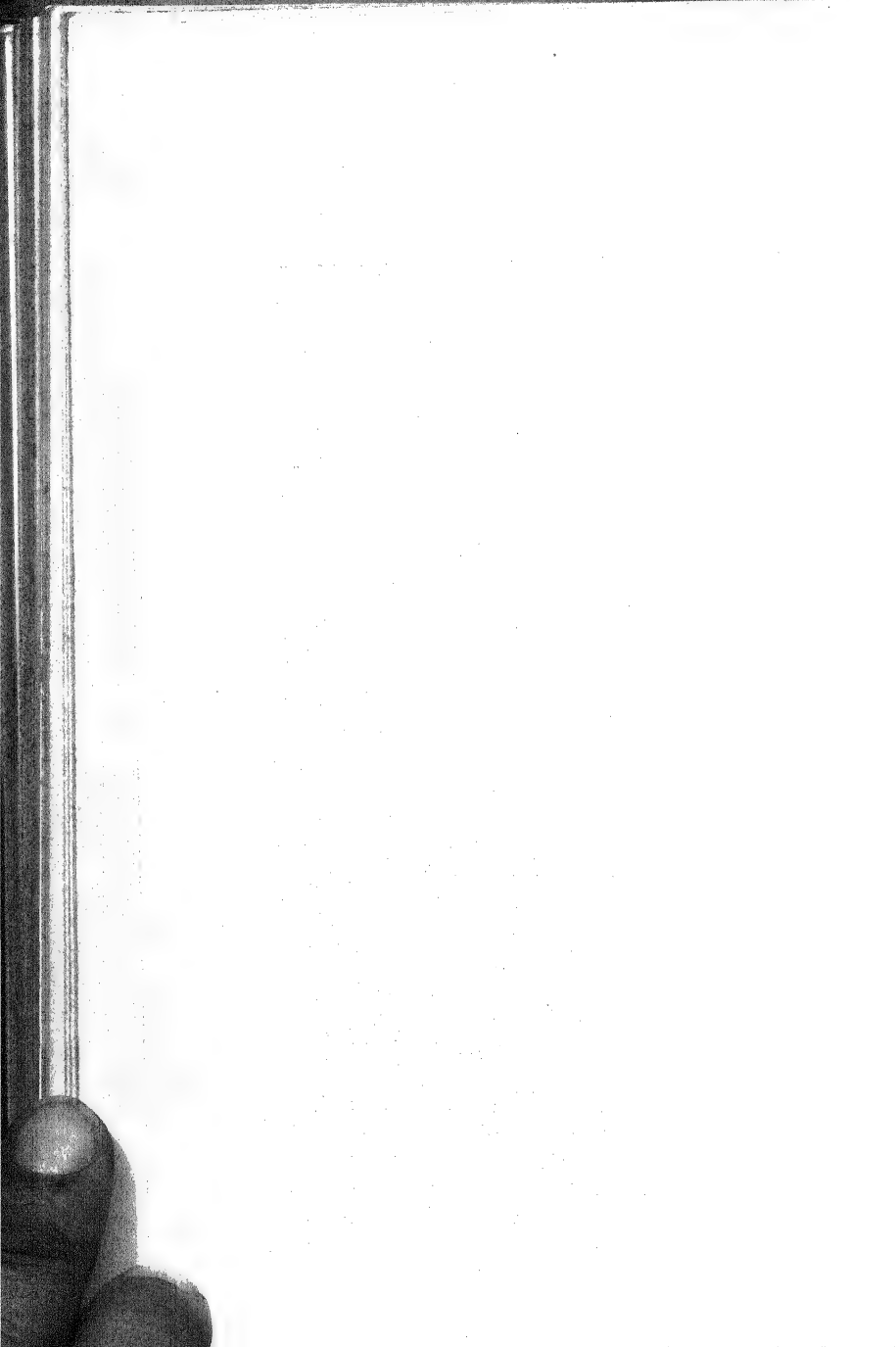
¹ Balakandam, *Ramayana*.

² *Ibid.*



PLATE VII.—TRIMURTI, ELEPHANTA, EIGHTH CENTURY A.D.

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a discipline for artists, certainly points to an idealistic aesthetics as characteristic of this period, and yet we find that the law-givers Manu and Chanakya, developing the Vedic idea of caste, still persisted in adhering to a puritanical objection to art: the first by prohibiting the "householder to dance, or sing, or play on musical instruments," and by reckoning "architects, actors, and singers amongst the unworthy men who should not be invited to the ceremony of offerings to the dead"; the second by classing musicians and actors with courtesans. But this cleavage of opinion is hardly worth noticing, since in the course of the centuries during which the Epics were sung as ballads and finally composed, many views flourished which were, however, all feeble rivals of the main current of devotionism that had written itself largely and indelibly on Epic literature, and stamped itself predominantly and ineradicably on the art of the Epic period.¹

¹ Besides the aesthetic implications of the religio-philosophical conceptions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, note that the two stories have frequently been illustrated in Indian art, specially in Java and Bali, and afforded endless themes for the drama and the dance.

V

PURANAS

IMMEDIATELY following the Epics, about the first century A.D., the Puranas, mythological and speculative histories of the universe, began to be written. They were intended to promote several particular Brahmanical beliefs, which had been steadily developing since the Vedic times. These books all recognised the main Hindu doctrine of Trimurti, or the triple manifestation of the Supreme Deity in His creative, preservative, and destructive aspects, the source of which lies in the hymn of creation. There we have seen that the Absolute was suggested as having manifested Itself, by splitting Itself, as it were, into two eternal substances, soul and matter. The equilibrium of soul and matter, the Hindus believe, is determined by three ultimate *gunas* or qualities: *Sattvas*, or truth which is creative, *Rajas*, or passion which maintains, and *Tamas*, or gloom which destroys this equilibrium. In the process of the deification of the abstract philosophical conceptions, it was designed to symbolise these three aspects of the Universe or God. As Creator, the Supreme Being was called Brahma, as preserver, Vishnu, and as destroyer, Siva. I shall come to the detailed symbolism evolved out of this conception of Trimurti by the different sects of Hinduism later. It is sufficient here to say that while the concep-

tion of Brahma, as Ishvara, is behind all Puranic Hinduism, Vishnu became the divine hero of the Vaishnavite sect, and Siva was adopted by the Saivas, and further incarnations of all of them were gradually evolved. All the three gods came to be represented in art, all together in Trimurti figures and singly in their various incarnations. And since they symbolised the three eternal *gunas* or qualities of the universe, all images were classified to conform to one or the other of these chief types.

The vast discussions of the creation of the universe, its destruction and regeneration, of the genealogy of the gods and the reigns of the Manus (law givers), and the histories of the kings of the solar and the lunar race which occur in the Puranas, show that their preponderating preoccupation is to supply an encyclopaedia of ancient Hindu philosophy and religion. There are, however, also many references to art, two of which, occurring in the *Bhagvata* and the *Agni Purana*, may here be noted.

Reviving the favourite simile of the Upanishads, the former compares the practice of *Yoga* (contemplation) by artists to the craft of the arrow maker: "I have learned concentration from the maker of arrows."

The latter, also borrowing its view from the Upanishads, recognises the connection of *Yoga* with dream life, and deduces a rule for the completion of a work of art in the mind during a deliberately evoked dream before setting it down

in material form. The artisan is enjoined, for instance, to perform purificatory ablutions on the night before starting his work and to pray:

O thou Lord of all the gods, teach me in dreams how to carry out all the work I have in mind.

VI

CLASSICAL SANSKRIT LITERATURE

THERE is a theory, originally suggested by Max Müller, that in the wake of the Epics and the Puranas there began, in the fifth century A.D., a renaissance of Indian art and literature at the court of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain. Certain details of this view have been rejected by the late Professor Macdonnel on the authority of the epigraphical researches of Mr. Fleet and Professor Bühler, but the main fact that the fifth century A.D. marked the beginning of a cultural revival is so obvious from the quality of the artistic and literary work executed during this time as to seem absolutely irrefutable. In fact, it was the century which saw the "culmination," as Dr. Coomaraswamy calls it, "of the two phases of Indian history, the Vedic and the Epic, and the efflorescence of another"—a Golden Age. The Gupta dynasty had inaugurated in A.D. 400 a political, social, and spiritual unity in India, a unity that was destined not only to bind India into a comprehensive whole for a thousand years or so, but to breathe the breath of oneness into the diverse parts of Asia. When I speak of the inauguration of a cultural unity by the Guptas, I do not mean that they fused the heterogeneous elements of Indian culture into an all-absorbing scheme of life. No such thing has ever happened in India, nor can it ever

be supposed to happen in so vast a sub-continent. What I mean to say is that the Guptas sowed the seed of good will and toleration among the various powers—political, social, religious, and intellectual—which held sway over the country. They were patrons of art and literature, and it was during their time, or in times immediately subsequent to theirs, that those monuments were achieved which will remain the chief glory of India until the contemporary renaissance is perfected. Not only was this the age which stimulated the production of a great deal of original art and literature, but the arts and sciences of the preceding ages were codified during this time, and original theories of criticism of poetry, drama, dance, music, painting, and sculpture were evolved in a vast literature of technical laws such as the *Bharata-natya-Shastra* and other *Silpa-shastras*. I have shown how the Epics grouped together the ideas of the previous ages. The Classical renaissance perfectly assimilated these ideas. The philosophical idealism of the Upanishads had now been thoroughly reconciled to Brahmanical systems of devotional belief, *Hinayana* Buddhism had become *Mahayana* Buddhism, and the asceticism of the Jainas had weakened. The sensibility of man had emerged from the trial of ages of intellectualism to indulge openly and officially in an indulgent humanism. The belief in a kind God who takes the forms imagined by His worshippers, the recognition of the brotherhood of man evoked by a tolerant understanding of life, the exercise

of love of nature and kindness to every being on earth—these and other traits are reflected in the frescoes at Ajanta, in the works of Asvaghosha, and in all the arts of this time.

As would seem obvious, a humanist culture evolved a humanist theory of criticism. Kalidasa, the greatest dramatist of the Golden Age, among other references to the arts scattered about in his works, has a scene in *Sakuntala* from which we may gather such a criterion.¹

Dushanta, the princely hero of the play, fails to recognise his beloved Sakuntala, and sends her away from the palace where she has sought him after long years of separation. When she has gone he discovers his mistake and pines for her. In order to console himself he has painted a picture of Sakuntala:

(Enter a maid with a tablet)

MAID.

Your majesty, here is the picture of your lady. *(She produces the tablet.)*

KING *(gazing at it)*.

It is a beautiful picture. See!

A graceful arch of brows above great eyes;
Lips bathed in darting, smiling light that flies
Reflecting from white teeth; a mouth as red
As red karkandu-fruit; love's brightness shed
Over all her face in bursts of liquid charm—
The picture speaks, with living beauty warm.

¹ For other references to the arts in Classical literature, see "Portrait Painting as a Device in Sanskrit Plays," *J.A.O.S.*, Vol. 39.

CLOWN (*looking at it*).

The sketch is full of sweet meaning. My eyes seem to stumble over its uneven surface. What more can I say? I expect to see it come to life, and I feel like speaking to it.

MISHRAKESHI.

The King is a clever painter. I seem to see the dear girl before me.

KING.

My friend,

What in the picture is not fair,
Is badly done;
Yet something of her beauty there,
I feel, is won.

(*Sighing*). I treated her with scorn and loathing ever;
Now o'er her pictured charms my heart would burst.

CLOWN.

There are three figures in the picture, and they are all beautiful. Which one is the lady Sakuntala?

KING.

Which do you think?

CLOWN (*observing closely*).

I think it is this one leaning against the creeper which she has just sprinkled. Her face is hot and the flowers are dropping from her hair; for the ribbon is loosened. Her arms droop like weary branches; she has loosened her girdle, and she seems a little fatigued. This, I think, is the lady Sakuntala; the others are her friends.

KING.

You are good at guessing. Besides, here are proofs of my love.

See where discolorations faint
Of loving handling tell;
And here the swelling of the paint
Shows where my sad tears fell.

Chatoorika, I have not finished the background. Go, get the brushes.

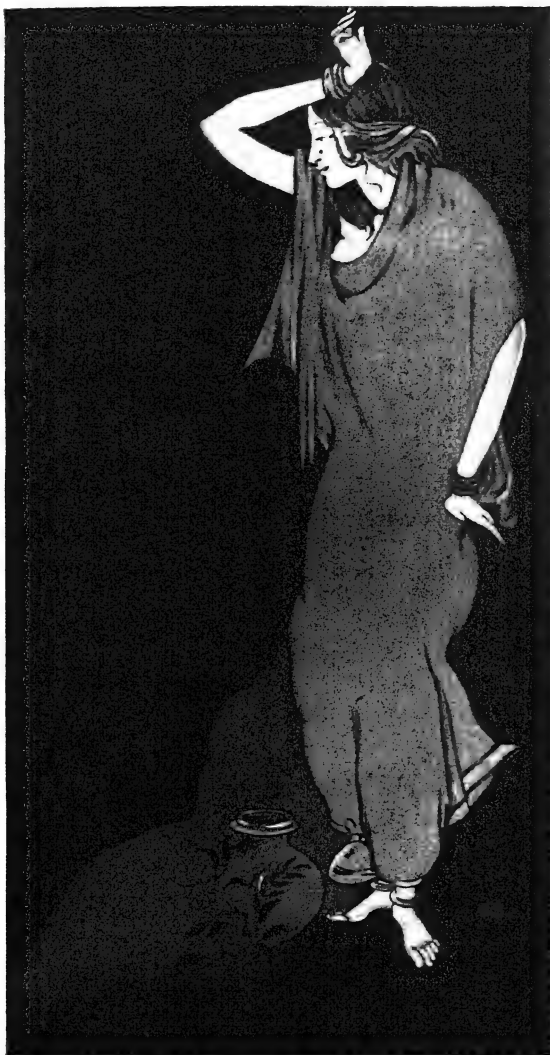
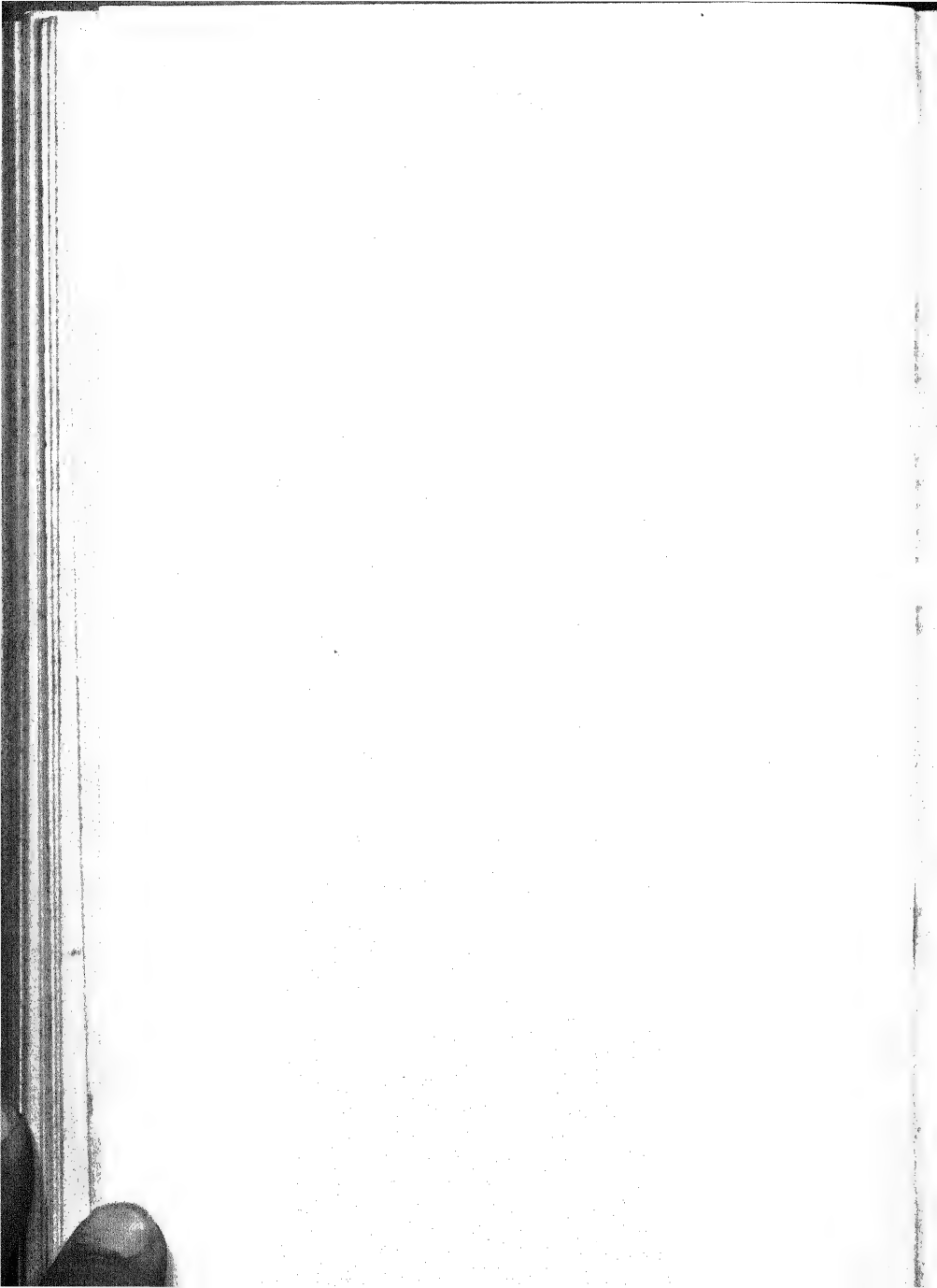


PLATE VIII.—SAKUNTALA
By kind permission of O. C. Gangoly



CLOWN.

What are you going to add?

MISHRAKESKI.

Surely, every spot that the dear girl loved.

KING.

Listen, my friend.

The stream of Malini, and on its sands
The swan pair resting; holy foothill lands
Of great Himalayas' sacred ranges, where
The yaks are seen; and under the trees that bear
Bark hermit-dresses on their branches high.
A doe that on the buck's horn rubs her eye.

And another ornament that Sakuntala loved I have
forgotten to paint.

The siris blossom, fastened o'er her ear,
Whose stamens brush her cheek;
The lotus chain like autumn moonlight soft
Upon her bosom meek.

CLOWN.

But why does she cover her face with fingers lovely as
the pink water lily? She seems frightened. (*He looks more
closely.*) I see. Here is a bold bad bee. He steals honey,
and so he flies at her lotus-face.

KING.

Sting that dear lip, O bee, with cruel power,
And ye shall be imprisoned in a flower.

CLOWN.

Well, he doesn't seem afraid of your dreadful punish-
ment. . . .

KING.

Will he not go, though I warn him?

CLOWN (*aloud*).

It is only a picture, man.¹

¹ *Sakuntala*, translated by A. W. Ryder, Act IV, pp. 73-74.

It is evident from this and other references to art in Classical Sanskrit literature that besides the works produced to supply the demands of the temple, art had now also come to be considered as an accomplishment which might be acquired by private individuals. The reason was, as I have said before, that philosophy had now been reconciled to life and the popular view had been evolved that by treating the universe through art and literature man was only communicating with God. "The specifically religious element is no longer insistent, no longer anti-social; it is manifested in life, and in an art that reveals life not in a mode of opposition to spirituality, but as an intricate ritual fitted to the consummation of perfect experience."¹

The treatment of life by the artist must, however, in no sense be construed as realistic in the Western sense of that word, because the method employed by Indian artists has always been one of deliberate visualisation—the evolution of the conception before execution. Nowhere in Classical literature is there a reference to the artist drawing or painting from life, or carving figures in imitation of living models, and those very elements which seem in the Classical frescoes of Ajanta and in Gupta sculpture to be taken from life testify only to the keenness of the Hindu artist's memory. "They are simply the most vital and the most felt part of Indian art, where the artist is most completely and literally identified with his subject."² There is here no consideration

¹ Coomaraswamy.

² *Ibid.*

paid to anatomical detail. The artist knows life, no doubt, but he draws back and looks at it from afar as a beautiful and coloured whole, a glorious epic harmony. Another fact which proves the essentially imaginary and idealistic trend of this art is that alongside those very themes which appear naturalistic in it are mythological and legendary subjects, evidently seen through the burning imagination of religious enthusiasts. The fire of *bhakti* and *Yoga*, over which Hindu artists have burnt themselves in sacrifice from the earliest times till the decadence of India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was at its intensest in the Classical Age. The devotional cults of Vaishnavism, Saivism, and Saktism were, as I have said, at their ripest and purest. And if the patrons of art and literature, the Gupta kings, were, as the chroniclers tell us, fervent Vaishnava Bhagvatas, there is not the slightest reason to doubt that the art which flourished in their reigns, even though sometimes narrative and descriptive, was inspired by a profound religious instinct. It is an art which is charged with an ever present sense of the Divine in the heart of humanity, an art which above all others evokes in us a state of ethereal, buoyant tenseness, at once the exaltation and the annihilation of self, a forgetfulness more restful than sleep.

VII

PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

THE Golden Age, which saw the rise of Classical Sanskrit literature out of the Veda and the Epics, also witnessed the evolution of the *Darshanas* (demonstrations), or systems of philosophy. As these reinterpretations and codifications of Upanishadic teaching have supplied the deeper foundations of Indian culture until to-day, their bearing on aesthetics, though not immediate and direct, is important. There are six of these systems:

- (1) *Purva Mimansa.*
- (2) *Uttara Mimansa (Vedanta).*
- (3) *Samkhya.*
- (4) *Yoga.*
- (5) *Nyaya.*
- (6) *Vaisesika.*

I will not go into the details of all these systems here. I will point out only the salient features, which are purely theoretical, while I shall go into some detail in dealing with those which have deeply entered the living thoughts of the people.

The *Purva Mimansa* is a critical exposition of the Veda, which it regards as eternal. It was originally designed to be an inquiry into the ritual of the Vedic texts, but became an epistemological discussion of the true and proper method of

instituting such inquiries. As an examination of the nature of knowledge, it paved the way for the ontological theory of the *Uttara Mimansa*, and on that fact alone rests its claim to be regarded as a speculative system.

The *Uttara Mimansa*, or *Vedanta*, system reinterprets the Upanishadic theory which explains the universe as having emanated from the one super-spiritual principle, *Ananda*. As embodied in the commentaries of Sri Sankaracharya, who lived in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., and of Ramanuja, who taught in the twelfth century, the Vedanta permeated the very marrow of Hindu society, and has exercised an influence in India comparable only to that of Christianity in Europe.

To the Upanishadic philosophers the *Atman-Brahman-Ananda* was an all-pervading Reality entering all the known and the unknown universes, and essentially one with them, though veiled from them by their varied forms, the manyness and the duality of their unessential phenomena. Sankaracharya declared that the formal, dualistic world is *Maya*, utterly illusive and unreal, having only a practical and conventional value. This doctrine of the unreality of the world raised the difficult question as to what purpose the Supreme Being had in creating this fictitious place. Sankaracharya explained the difficulty by the declaration that the Lord created the world to entertain Himself by indulging in the sport (*lila*) of creation. But, although he thus severed this world from the other world,

the sage allowed himself and his followers the grace of religion, through the practice of which, he held, a gradual emancipation from the bonds of existence might be achieved, and in spite of the fact that he was a profound intellect himself and could perhaps dispense with formal methods of communication with God, he recognised the need of images for worship, visited shrines, and sang devotional hymns, and in the end sought to be forgiven for these inconsistencies against the purity of his professed monism by praying: "O Lord, pardon my three sins: I have in contemplation clothed in form Thyself that has no form; I have in praise described Thee who dost transcend all qualities; and in visiting shrines I have ignored Thine Omnipresence."

The apparent contradictions of Sankaracharya's belief in the complete separation of Reality (God) from appearance (universe) and his practice of a devotional theism, implying a belief in the phenomenal world, were reconciled by Ramanuja, who set forth the doctrine that the *Brahman*, the Reality or God (whom he identified with Vishnu), though not essentially one with individual souls, is yet related to them because after salvation they become part of Him. The Supreme Soul is thus not an abstract thing, but a soul possessing all good qualities, which occasionally appears enshrined in matter. By declaring that the Deity manifests Himself in various incarnations for the benefit of His worshippers, and that by faith in Him and by the practice of love and devotion to Him men can

attain His qualities, and thus rise from the low plane of material existence to the joy of the Infinite, Ramanuja gave a strong foundation to the devotional creed of Vaishnavism.

The *Samkhya* system supplies the basis for the *Yoga*, and may thus be considered as subsidiary to it.

We have seen how the Upanishads emphasised the difficulties inherent in the task of self-realisation, the attainment of God. The instruments of knowledge, it was there maintained, are vitiated by relativity, and must be purged of all impurity if they are to enable us to apprehend reality. In the Epic period the doctrine of *Yoga* was developed further, particularly in connection with the ends of religion. In the aphorisms of Patanjali, however, it was elaborated into a definite system, and in that form it has been the theoretical backbone of the practice of *Yoga* ever since.

The *Samkhya* philosophy postulated a pluralism of two beginningless and endless substances, *purusha* (soul) and *prakriti* (matter), as against the pure monism of the Vedanta. *Prakriti* (matter) is regarded as the first cause, the Unconditioned source of all existence, and *purusha*, the Unconditioned soul, is the idle spectator of the eternal unfolding and manifestation of the *prakriti*, the material principle, being distinct from it really, and only apparently, unconsciously, allied to it.

Prakriti, or universal matter, has three *gunas* (qualities), which do not constitute its essence (that

being indeterminate and One), but merely express three phases of it in terms of ordinary experience. The three *gunas* are *Sattvas* (goodness or truth); *Rajas* (fieriness or passion); and *Tamas* (gloom), so called on account of the feeling which matter evokes at different times. They characterise all things, and the proportion in which the one or the other of them predominates in a thing makes the nature of that thing real, fiery, or gloomy.

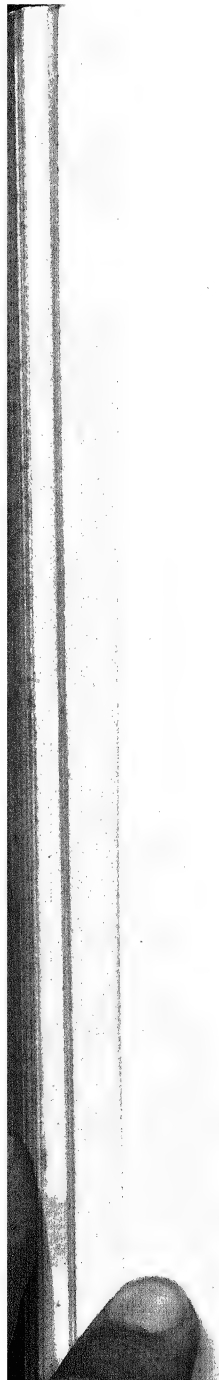
Resting on the familiar conception that the universe is one long process of creation, preservation, and destruction, the Samkhya suggests that when the universe has been temporarily dissolved into its primaeval stuff the three *gunas*, or qualities of the universe, are in perfect equilibrium. In this state matter remains inert for a time, and the soul relatively bound to it rests too. But then matter moves, for the souls have to endure the results of their former *karma* (deeds), or if they are almost perfect have yet to attain the final liberation. So the Universe renews itself, the equilibrium of the *gunas* is lost, and the souls are clothed in material forms.

The actual process of creation is some such as this: *Prakriti*, or universal matter, gives birth to *buddhi*, Pure Compassionate Reason. The *guna* or quality of *sattva* predominates in it. *Buddhi* gives rise to *Ahamkara*, the principle of the I, which in the Cartesian dictum of "I think, therefore I am," is imagined to be real, "the subject of its own cognition." From *Ahamkara* springs up *manas*, the



PLATE IX.—VISHNU IN BRASS. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

By kind permission of the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



mind, or the intellect, and the ten *indriyas*, or sense-organs, five of which, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, are the "organs of the understanding," the other five, speech, grasp, gait, evacuation, and procreation, the "organs of action." The reception by these organs of the elements of the external world, earth, water, fire, air, and ether, not in their real subtle forms, but in their empirical gross forms, by the respective sense organs, nose, tongue, eye, skin, ear, creates experience.

As soon as the *buddhi* realises the distinction of matter and soul, through the preponderance of the quality of truth in it, it has escaped into the beginningless and endless Soul, and is freed for ever from earthly existence.

Patanjali, who defined *Yoga* as the "repression of the (lower) activities of the understanding," took his stand by the *Samkhya* hypothesis, that the soul has become lost in the seemingly real world which the *buddhi* and its complementary functions create out of their experience. So he enjoins an introspective analysis of the *buddhi*, in order that it may realise *svarupa* its "essential form," the Unconditioned, and may thus be freed from the slavery to experience, and be exalted into *Kaivalya* (solitude of the soul).

There are two kinds of *Yoga*, namely, (1) *Kriya-Yoga* (practical), *Raja-Yoga* (superior). The former is a necessary preliminary for the exercise of the latter, and entails the following rules: (1) strict adherence to the law against slaughter, falsehood, theft,

unchastity, and mammon-worship; (2) the exercise of the outer and the inner check to secure the purity of the soul, and the performance of ascetic exercises, the repeating of prayers, or of the mystic symbol *Aum*, and devotion to God; (3) the determination of postures suitable to meditation; (4) the regulation of breath, in which the habit of long breath, inspiration, and the retention of breath is acquired; (5) the withdrawal of the senses from external things to the *buddhi*, and the realisation of its intimate relation as soul.

When the exercise of these practices has led to the purification of the intellect and the Pure Reason, the rules of *Raja-Yoga* may be practised in order to merge the intellect and the Pure Reason, which makes the soul spiritual. These are as follows: (1) concentration, the confinement of the *buddhi* to some part of the body or to an external object, attention being fixed on a particular point to drill the understanding into a perfect certainty of aim and steadfastness;¹ (2) contemplation, or the formation of imaginary conceptions in a state of concentration;² (3) the union or concent is then achieved

¹ "Cease, but from thy own activity, steadfastly fixing thine eyes upon one point" (see Maritain, *Prayer and Intelligence*).

² "In my opinion," says St. Teresa, "we should grow in virtue by contemplating the Divine Perfections. . . . The best method of acquiring self-knowledge is to apply ourselves to the knowledge of God."

"Without contemplation we shall never completely abandon our weaknesses and imperfections. We shall always remain attached to the earth, and we shall never rise much above the sentiments of human nature. Never shall we be

by the fading away of the concentrated *buddhi* into ecstasy, to become the unfettered soul, realising the solitude of Kaivalya, the full realisation of Self and God.¹

The only value of the two last systems, the *Nyaya* and the *Vaisesika*, is that they both elaborate a reasoned logic to prove the validity of the intuitive method of God realisation, and thus strengthen the *apriori* assumption of a Supreme Being by the *Vedanta*, the *Samkhya*, and the *Yoga* philosophies, as the end of all human endeavour.

able to give God a Perfect service. With contemplation we shall do more for ourselves and others in one month, than we shall do without it in ten years" (Père Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*).

¹ The significance of the kind of state that *Yoga* is understood to be in Indian philosophy may well be illustrated by referring to the following passage from Schelling's *Philosophical Letters upon Dogmatism and Criticism*: "In all of us there dwells a secret marvellous power of freeing ourselves away from external things, and of so discovering to ourselves the eternal in us in the form of unchangeability. This presentation of ourselves to ourselves is the most truly personal experience, upon which depends everything that we know of the supra-sensual world. This presentation shows us for the first time what real existence is, whilst all else only appears to be. It differs from every presentation of the sense in its perfect freedom, while all other presentations are bound, being overweighed by the burden of the object. . . . This intellectual presentation of the sense occurs when we cease to be our own object, when, withdrawing into ourselves, the perceiving image merges in the self-perceived. At that moment we annihilate time, but time or rather eternity itself (the timeless) is in us. The external world is no longer an object for us, but is lost in us."

VIII

BRAHMANICAL THEISM

BRAHMANICAL theism had been current in the minds of Indian humanity since the utterance in the *Rig-Veda* of the first hymn to Varuna the One God. But the alternate exaltation of each of the several gods of the Vedic pantheon, as well as of the deities of the original inhabitants of India, by the Aryans, during the period of the *Brahmanas*, the Upanishads, and the Epics, only produced a number of minor theistic cults, none of which was strong enough to challenge the rise of Buddhism and Jainism. About the beginning of the Christian era, however, two of the three deities who clothed the creating, preserving, and destroying aspects of the universe as conceived by the Puranas, stood out among others as the recipients of chief honours—Vishnu, the preserver, and Siva, the destroyer. The worship of each of these deities became gradually embodied in two strong devotional cults, the Vaishnava and the Saiva, which became formidable rivals of Buddhism and Jainism, and finally absorbed both those religions. From a consideration of the rôles played by the gods of the Trimurti in the active manifested world, i.e. as creators, had arisen the conception of their *Shaktis* or powers, their female counterparts. Saraswati was the consort of Brahma, Lakshmi of Vishnu, Kali, Parvati, or Devi of Siva. Around

the last of these goddesses arose the cult of Sakti. During a long period of fifteen centuries or more these three sects have been the chief pillars of Hinduism, and the inspirational source of an unceasing activity of craft production.

(a) VAISHNAVISM

Vaishnavism originally began in the worship of Vishnu, the gracious Rig-Vedic Sun-god, who had been exalted to become the Blessed Cosmic Spirit in the period of the *Brahmanas*, and been later conceived as the Absolute Supreme Soul entering the individual souls. He was supposed to be incarnated in Vasu-Deva. Vasu-Deva was given the name of Bhagvata (the worshipful and the adorable), after which his followers came to be known as *Bhagvatas*. The cult of the *Bhagvatas* was sometimes known as *Ekantika Dharma* (the religion of love and devotion to the One). Vishnu was also conceived as the Preserver, as the loving guardian of all the people in the ceaseless change of the Cosmic Life, in the Puranic Trimurti. Another incarnation of Vishnu was Krishna, the son of Vasu-Deva, and the sage who is the real hero of the *Mahabharata* and associated with Gopala Krishna, the cowherd god of an aboriginal tribe called the Abhiras.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Vasudeva Krishna gives, as we have noted, a consistent exposition of the philosophy of life, reconciling the doctrine of God as an Absolute Reality with His appearance in

various forms, and thus brings the Supreme God within reach of the active citizen of the world, as the object of ritualistic worship in a language which, as may have become obvious from the passages of the *Gita* cited in my exposition of the Epics and from those that immediately follow, is very similar in spirit to the conception of God as incarnated in the world as this conception is put forth in the Bible. "I am the Self inwardly dwelling in all born beings, the beginning and the middle and the end of born beings am I. Of the gods I am Vishnu, of the luminaries I am the Sun; I am Life and I am Death; all this universe is strung upon Me as rows upon a thread."¹ "When any devotee seeks to worship any form with faith, it is none other than Myself that bestows that steadfast faith, and when by worshipping any forms he wins what he desires, it is none other than Myself that grants his prayers. Howsoever men approach Me, so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine."²

About the fourth century A.D., the Vasudeva Krishna cult had become well established as the Bhagvata or Pancaratra religion, and came to be represented in Gupta art. The legends of the loves of the cowherd god Krishna and his consort Radha, current among the Abhiras, had become attached to Vaishnavism, and in that form it continued to

¹ "All authority has been given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18).

² "My yoke is easy and My burden light" (Matt. xi. 30).

exercise its influence on a great part of Hindu society, till in the eighth century A.D. the assertion of the pure monism of an attributeless God as the only real existence by Sankaracharya provided a set-back to it.

The need to define Ishvara so that men may not merely "believe for practical ends what all the time is metaphysically false," as the God of religious worship had come to be on account of Sankaracharya's reduction of God to an abstract idea, was felt by Ramanuja in the eleventh century, and he reinterpreted the Reality of Sankaracharya as an "embodied soul," i.e. capable of incarnation in the world. The principle of devotional worship which had tended to become inconsistent in the hands of Sankaracharya thus regained its former force.

Nimbarka, a Brahmin who lived at Mathura in the twelfth century, also helped to revive the devotional side of Vaishnavism by stressing the passionately ecstatic worship, not only of Krishna, but also of his mistress Radha, an aspect of the religion which Ramanuja had been led to neglect, perhaps on account of his belief in devotion as pure meditation engendered by his deeply speculative leanings. Vaishnavism, in the form in which it had now come to be understood, that is as a religion of love and devotion to a personal and immanent God manifested in the world in individual souls, inspired all mediaeval art and poetry. Rajput painting of the seventh and eighth centuries has its source in

it, and the hymns of Chandidas and Vidyapathi, of the fifteenth century, which so much influenced the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, are indebted to it. The themes of Vaishnava poets and artists were generally derived from the legends of the loves of Krishna and his mistresses interpreted in the light of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Krishna considered as the Divine Soul playing with his mistresses, the human souls, was a convenient symbol to illustrate the abstract relation of the God to human beings. The mode of expression of Vaishnava poets and artists is rather imagist than allegorical, in the sense in which "in imagist art things are what they suggest, while allegory, however appropriate, is always arbitrary: to understand the Krishna lila as an allegory is to misunderstand it, since it is neither fanciful nor pseudo-historical, but a drama perpetually enacted in the heart of every *bhakta* or votary."¹

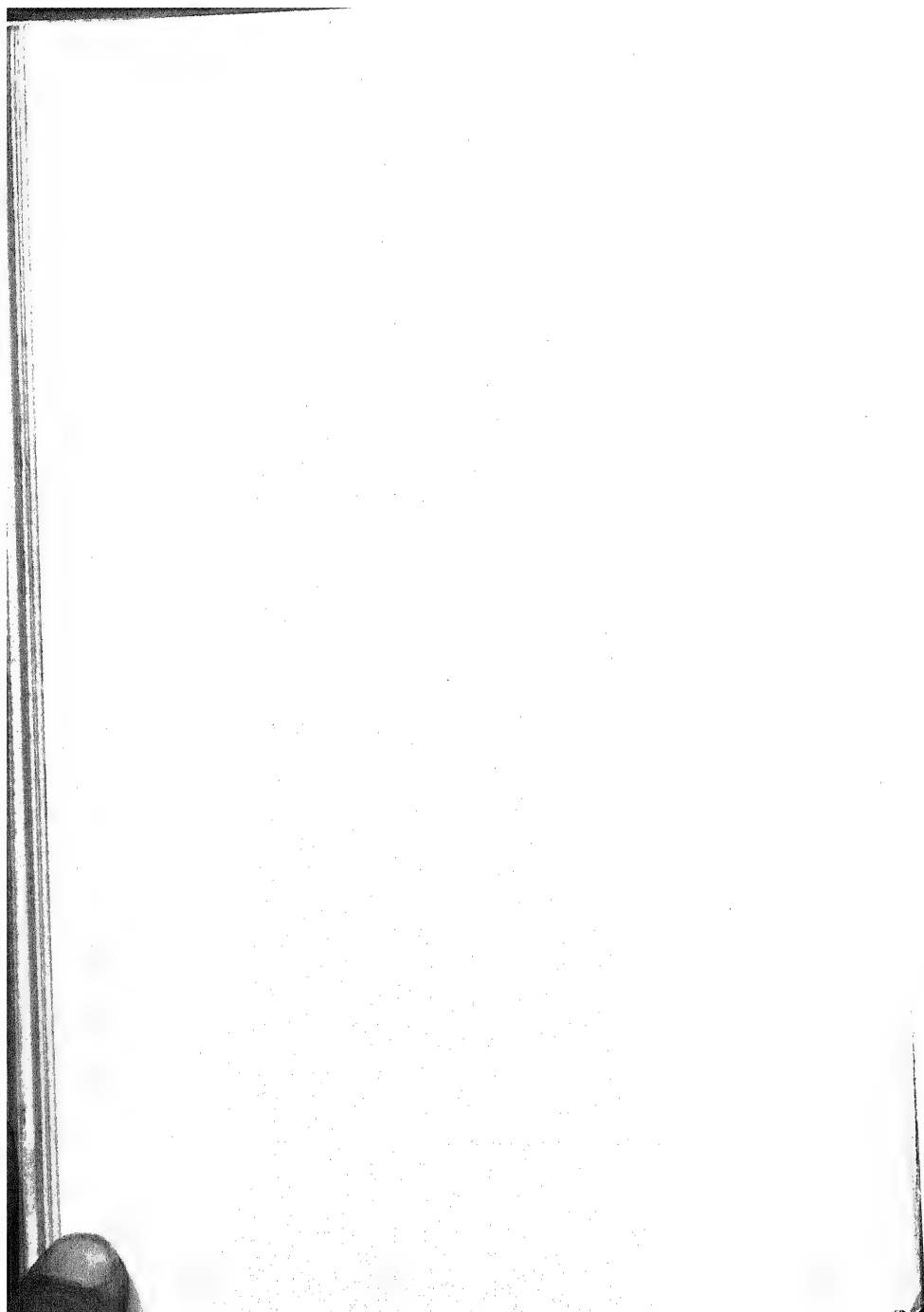
Madhava, or Anandatiratha as he was alternatively called, attacked Sankaracharya in the thirteenth century, and denounced him as an incarnation of some daemon who was sent to mankind to propagate disbelief by separating God from the world. He postulated a dualism by which besides the reality of God, the efficient cause of the universe, that of individual souls was also acknowledged, and the realisation of salvation was declared to lie in the adoration of Vayu, the wind, the son of Vishnu, who was supposed to be reincarnated in Madhava

¹ Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of Indian Collections*, Boston, p. 23.



PLATE X.—SIVA NATARAJA. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

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himself. The philosophical background of Vaishnavism was thus further strengthened.

Ramananda (considered as the fifth in apostolic succession from Ramanuja), who lived towards the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century, revolted against the caste system, and stressed the position of Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana* as an incarnation of the Supreme Vishna in the Vaishnava pantheon.

Kabir, who lived in the fifteenth century, followed Ramananda's footsteps as an adorer of Rama, but having been brought up in the family of a Mohamadan weaver, denounced idolatry, and brought a trait of pantheistic Sufism to bear upon the Vaishnava conception of God.

Tulsi Das (1532-1623), the author of a Hindi version of the *Ramayana*, popularised the *bhakti* worship of Rama among the masses, and his influence still persists through his Hindi version of the *Ramayana*, the *Ramacaritmanas* (the lake of the deeds of Rama), generally called the bible of Hindustan.

In the sixteenth century two energetic workers in the cause of the faith were Vallabha, a south Indian Brahmin resident at Mathura, in the north of India, and Chaitanya, a Bengali mystic. The former vigorously stressed the worship of the boy-god Krishna, through a rather exaggeratedly dramatic ritual; the latter was enchanted by the conception of Divine love as concretised in the amorous dalliances of Radha and Krishna, and sought with great fervour to enhance the interest of the Vaish-

navas in that aspect of his belief, and in the singing of devotional hymns and dancing as forms of ceremonial.

Various other reformers such as Vithoba, Nam Dev, Tuka Ram, etc., each in his own way stressed anew the main formula of Vaishnava belief, which may be summed up in the words of a Hindu sage, "the worship of the Impersonal laid no hold on my heart."

The Vaishnavas considered the icons worshipped in the temples as material incarnations of the Supreme Vishnu, along with his ten usually recognised *avatars* (manifestations).¹ This remarkable position given to images is adequately summed up by Govindacharya Svamin in the *Yatindra-mata-dipika*, when he says that the Deity "deigns to descend with His immaterial or spiritual person into any material substance as may be lovingly chosen by His votary, lending Himself to the sweet will of His worshipper in all details of service."

(b) SAIVISM

Siva, the Supreme God of the Saivas, like the favourite deities of the other popular cults, traces

¹ Vishnu is but a general name for what in reality constitutes a considerable variety of different figures, to each of which attaches a different name. Ordinarily, however, the figure of Vishnu is symbolised with his four attributes: the mace, the lotus, the conch, and the wheel (discus). See B. B. Bidyabinod, "Varieties of the Vishnu Image," *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 2.

his ancestry to the pregnant womb of the ancient aboriginal culture. The terrible and destructive aspects of nature, manifested in its angry rain and windstorms and violent earthquakes were, like the beautiful aspects of nature (the ugly and the beautiful being for the Hindus equally parts of God), early clothed by the poet's fancy in the concrete forms of Rudra, the wild howler. In order to propitiate his wrath prayers were offered to him, flattering eulogies sung, sacrifices made in his honour. Already towards the end of the Vedic period he had been raised to the dignity of the Supreme, the beneficent, and the benignant Siva.

The influence of the lower minds which the Aryans met during the process of their occupation of the Gangetic valley led to the identification of Siva with desolate burning-grounds, giant mountains, and dense forests, and he became the idol of worship of thieves, savages, and other wild dregs of humanity, who sought sanctuary in those unfrequented resorts of gloom and silence. Soon, however, he was dragged from the abyss of ignobility to which he had sunk, and assigned certain philosophical attributes, so that he might be made venerable enough to occupy, like the other deities, the throne of Supreme Godship. He was described as being manifested in fire, water, air, and all animate things. Following the composition of the Puranas, Siva had a place in the Trimurti. In mediaeval times, however, the personal side of Siva came to be more stressed. The Pancratra religion, founded by Pasupati, honoured

him, for instance, in his wild and destructive aspects, and the Agamic Saiva cult revered him as the personal Supreme. Siva was regarded as *Pati* (the Lord), of *Pasu* (the flock), joined with *Pasa* (the bond), which last is constituted by *anava* (ignorance), *karma* (deeds), and *maya* (illusion). He is the creator of the world, its instructor and redeemer. The human soul attains pure bliss by uniting with him and through gradual renunciation of the world, exercising *bhakti*, and by seeing everything in him.

Raised almost to the position of Supreme Godhood are the two sons of Siva, Kartikeya, the god of war, who is illustrated in art as mounted on the peacock, proud and pompous, and denoting the vanity of war; and Ganesha, the little child with the elephant's head, who as the god of worldly wisdom is frequently to be seen in Indian temples. Ganesha is the protector of households, and symbolises the common sense by which men win the goods of this world. His elephant's head signifies sagacity which is the chief quality of business men. His vehicle is the mean, the earth-burrowing rat. He is, however, not altogether without intuition, since intuition is reflected even in commonsensical reason. Ganesha is a "jovial, well-disposed deity," whose name the other gods allow to be invoked first in sacrificial ceremonies.

About the seventh century Agamic Saivism spread to the Tamil and Dravida country, i.e. South India, and a vast body of devotional art and literature grew up in honour of Siva. The literature,



PLATE XI.—GANESHA. JAVA
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mainly poetical, is embodied in the hymns of such men as Tirunamsambhandha; and his contemporary Appar, a Jain who became a Saivite Sundara; Mannikavasagar; Kundraditya; the ancestor of Raja Raja Chola, who ruled the Chola Empire in A.D. 984-985; Trimula; Nambi Andar Nambi.

Saiva art has been dedicated, mainly, to the making of stone and bronze images of Siva (*Lingam* and *Nataraja*) for use in the temples. Of these the Nataraja bronzes are well known as signifying the concept of Siva as the Lord of the dancers. Dr. Coomaraswamy, who has done so much to make the Nataraja images known in Europe, has summarised the legend on which they are founded from the *Koyil Puranam*. "Siva appeared in disguise, amongst a congregation of ten thousand sages, and in the course of disputation confuted them and so angered them thereby, that they endeavoured by incantations to destroy him. A fierce tiger was created in sacrificial flames, and rushed upon him, but smiling gently, he seized it with his sacred hands, and with the nail of his little finger stripped it of its skin, which he wrapped about himself as if it had been a silken cloth. Undiscouraged by failure, the sages renewed their offerings, and there was produced a monstrous serpent, which he seized and wreathed about his neck. Then he began to dance; but there rushed upon him a last monster in the shape of a hideous, malignant dwarf. Upon him the God pressed the tip of his foot and broke the creature's back so that it writhed upon the

ground; and so with his last foe prostrate, Siva resumed the dance of which the gods were witnesses."¹

Another interpretation of the legend is that "he wraps about him as a garment, the tiger fury of human passion; the guile and malice of mankind, he wears as a necklace; and beneath his feet is for ever crushed the embodiment of evil."²

The dance of Siva is also the highest ideal of the art of dancing, not only as a symbol of perfect grace and rhythm, but as embodying "a dramatisation of the five activities—evolution, continuation, destruction, illusion, and enlightenment—which constitute the world process."³ And, in its rendering of the philosophical concept of becoming or change, Nataraja is a counterpart of the seated Buddha image which represents Being or Equipoise.

(c) SAKTISM

The cult of the Saktas or Sakti worshippers is built around the idea of female energy as being the mother of the world, the essence of Reality, the secret of the Cosmos. It centres mainly around one incarnation of feminine power, Kali, Devi or Sakti, Uma, Parvati. Kali, as the consort of Siva, was the recipient of due honour from the Dravidians and the Aryans in the Vedic Age. But just as Siva became infused with awe and terror at the hands of the

¹ Coomaraswamy, *Aims of Indian Art*, pp. 17-18.

² *Ibid.*

³ Coomaraswamy, *Dance of Siva*, pp. 56-67.

aboriginal tribes, so his consort, too, came to be regarded as a terrible goddess: *Kali* (black or female, time as destroyer); *Kapali* (wearer of skulls); *Mahakali* (the great destroyer); *Chandi* (angry); *Karalla* (frightful, victory); dwelling in the forests and frequenting the wilds, and to be propitiated by offerings of animal or human sacrifice.

Later, however, the idea of *Sakti*, or power, came to be associated with her, and she was raised to the honour of Supreme Godhood. "As the lightning is born of the clouds and disappears with the clouds, so *Brahman* and all the other gods take birth from *Kali* and will disappear in *Kali*." In this capacity she has come to be regarded as the Supreme Mother who evolves the universe and destroys it, or rather dissolves it into herself (since gods do not destroy), to create it again.¹

The general philosophical position of the Sakta cult is essentially Vedantic, the relation of the One (God) and the many (forms). "As an organic or dynamic system it reinterprets all in terms of Power from the atom of matter, which is said by modern science to be a reservoir of tremendous energy, to the Almighty, which is the commonest name in all religion for God. It is the cult of Power, both as partial and the whole, as the worshipper may desire. God is here regarded under twin aspects: as Power-

¹ The cult of the Great Mother is one of the oldest in the world, and was practised by various peoples of antiquity. See Glotz, *Aegean Civilisation*, and Denis Saurat, *Literature and the Occult Tradition*, D. H. Lawrence, *Etruscan Places and Fantasia of the Unconscious*.

holder or 'male' Siva, and as Power or Sakti, the Divine Spouse and Mother."¹

The Saktas describe the process of creation on the analogy of the hymn of creation doctrine that the world was created when desire arose within the mind of the Supreme Being, by figuratively declaring that when Siva and Sakti are possessed of desire they love and the world is created. Siva-Sakti thus becomes manifest in the universe of man and nature, and limits itself, loses its Perfection in the imperfection of the world. Then there arises in the soul of men and women the corresponding desire to attain Perfection. Some of them practise good deeds and return to the Mother, others continue to be born and reborn in the endless series of universes until their consciousness is pricked, too, to a longing for Perfection, and by practising the good life they realise salvation, become one with Siva-Sakti.

The worship of Sakti is carried on by concentration on the three aspects of the Divine Mother: (1) as the Supreme Goddess presiding over the world; (2) as the creator; (3) as destroyer.

The first aspect of the Mother is symbolised in *Sriyantra*, a diagrammatic representation in which Sakti is shown in the form of a point of concentrated power.

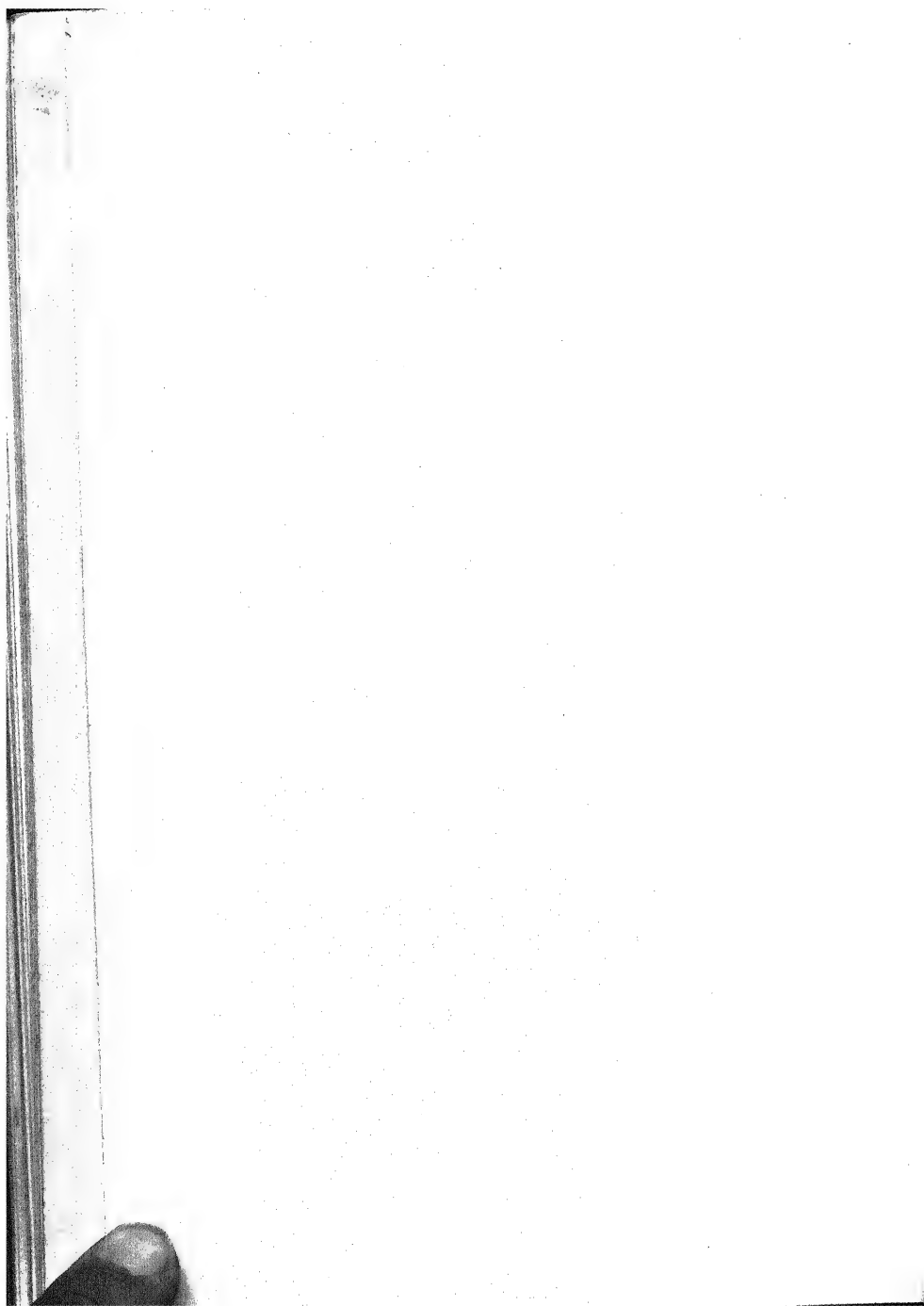
Since "procreation is the individual counterpart of Cosmic Creation," the second aspect of Sakti,

¹ Sir John Woodroffe, "The Indian Magna Mater," *Indian Arts and Letters*, Vol. II, No. 2, pp. 66 ff., 1926.



PLATE XII—DURGA CARVED IN STONE. SEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

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i.e. as the creator of the universe, is sensibly represented in her generative embrace with Siva. The concrete images expressing this philosophical aspect of the evolution of the universe are often considered obscene by European observers, but in India, where all life is sacramental, the marriage of male and female is characteristically interpreted with the highest spirituality as a symbol of the union of the Divine Soul and the human soul; and, as the exalted ritual of ordinary marriage shows, there is no vulgar motive necessarily attached to sensuality.

As destroyer of the world, i.e. as withdrawing it into herself in order to recreate, Sakti is portrayed in different ways, one of which is as a ten-armed goddess "dark blue like a rain cloud," wielding the sword of knowledge which severs man from ignorance (that is from partial knowledge) and gives him Perfect Experience, and wearing a garland of human heads which (exoterically the letters of the alphabet, as well as the symbols of the universe) are destroyed by her.

IX

THE TANTRA

THE *Tantra* constitutes the scriptures specifically suited to supply the needs of the *Kali-yuga* (iron age, i.e. our machine age).

The chief aim of the literature is to reconcile "Vedanta monism and dualism," "to give liberation to the *jiva* (individual) by a method through which individual truth is reached through a dualistic world."¹

The fundamental philosophic position from which it starts is really the Vedic as it has come down through all the stresses of history. The universe (*Samsara*) is "the moving thing," the everchanging flux of Heraclitus, and the manifestation of Siva the unchanging as *Sakti*, the changing power presented in the forms of relative dualistic experience, incomplete, as against complete or perfect experience (*Nirvana*). The ultimate reality, *Siva-Sakti* (unmanifested-manifested), is realised by an ascent from the manifest to the unmanifest, through the exercise of *Sadhana* (ritual worship) and its more difficult correlate, *Yoga*.

¹ Sir John Woodroffe, "The Psychology of Hindu Religious Ritual," *Indian Arts and Letters*, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 68, 1925. Throughout my survey of the *Tantra* I have based myself on Sir John Woodroffe, whose excellent summary of the vast literature of the *Tantra* in his monumental *Tantrik Texts* and other writings, is one of the greatest documents in the Library of Comparative Religion.

The *Tantra* takes its stand by the Vedantic hypothesis that "there is no Mind without Matter, or Matter without Mind, except in dreamless sleep, when the latter is wholly withdrawn." And "the mind has always an object," that is to say, "there is no vacuous mind." In a way almost akin to the *Samkhya*, it is further held that the mind is not a conscious mental entity, but an "unconscious quasi-material force," having "the power to limit itself, i.e. to assume the habits and forms of the environments into which it is put, and to the extent of such limited experience to appear as unconscious of its limitations." In apprehending things the mind takes the forms of the objects apprehended, and builds up a world, the reality of which it dogmatically assumes and never questions. "By meditation on anything as the Self, one becomes that thing."

This psychological truth is made by the *Tantra*, the basis of all religious ritual. For "as the mind must have an object which again shapes the mind, the ritual selects a good object, namely, the Divinity of worship with all good attributes, and who alone is Real. The *Sadhaka* (worshipper) meditates on and worships that. Continued thought, repetition, the engagement of the body in mental action, co-operate to produce a lasting and good tendency in the mental substance. Sincere and continued efforts effect the transformation of the worshipper into a likeness with the Divinity worshipped. For, as he who is always thinking bad thoughts becomes bad, so he who thinks Divine thoughts becomes himself

Divine. The transformation (of the worshipper to Godhood), which is commenced in *Sadhana*, is completed in *Yoga* (union), when the difference between the worshipper and the worshipped ceases in the unitary consciousness which is ecstasy or *Samadhi*, or transcendent experience."

Since, however, the "Divinity cannot be seized by the mind any more than air can be grasped by a pair of tongs, it is necessary . . . to have something placed before one as a representative of something else, which is what the Sanskrit terms, *Pratika*, *pratima*, for the object worshipped mean. This may be an external object or a mental one." According as the external object or a mental object is worshipped, the rite is called "gross" or "subtle." But it must be kept in mind that "we do not understand by the word 'gross' anything bad. It is merely used in contradistinction to the word 'subtle.'" Still, there is an important difference between the two modes of worship: "the grossest is that in which there is no call upon imagination, that is, the image of three dimensions being worshipped. Less so is the painting on the flat; then comes the emblem, such as *shalagrama* stone in the worship of Vishnu, and lastly, the *Yantra*, the (symbolistic) diagrammatic body of a (prayer verse) which is a geometrical formula for each god of the Hindu pantheon."

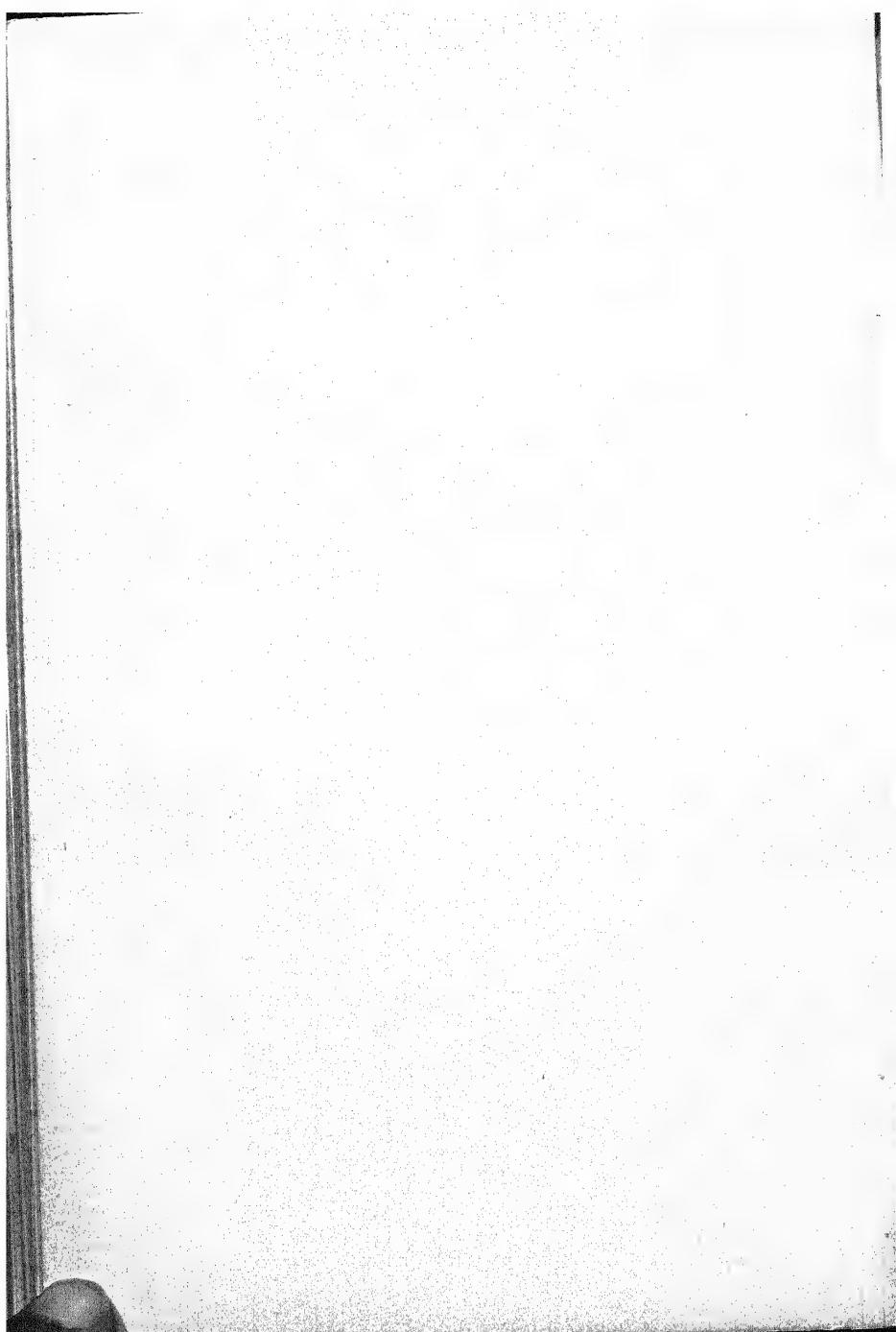
External worship is conducted by "physical acts, such as bodily prostrations, offerings of real flowers," etc., mental worship by imagining the Divinity "according to the meditational forms of *dhyana*-

mantra (mental description) given in the scriptures," as the recipient of prayers and offerings.

In carrying on the external worship through images, a preliminary ceremony is to invoke the Deity in the actual image used, and a concluding ceremony of bidding the Deity depart. This does not, of course, mean that the Deity is made to come and go, but that the worshipper suggests to himself the presence of God at the time of worship and His absence at its termination. The image is, therefore, just treated as a *via media*, and must not be considered as the God.

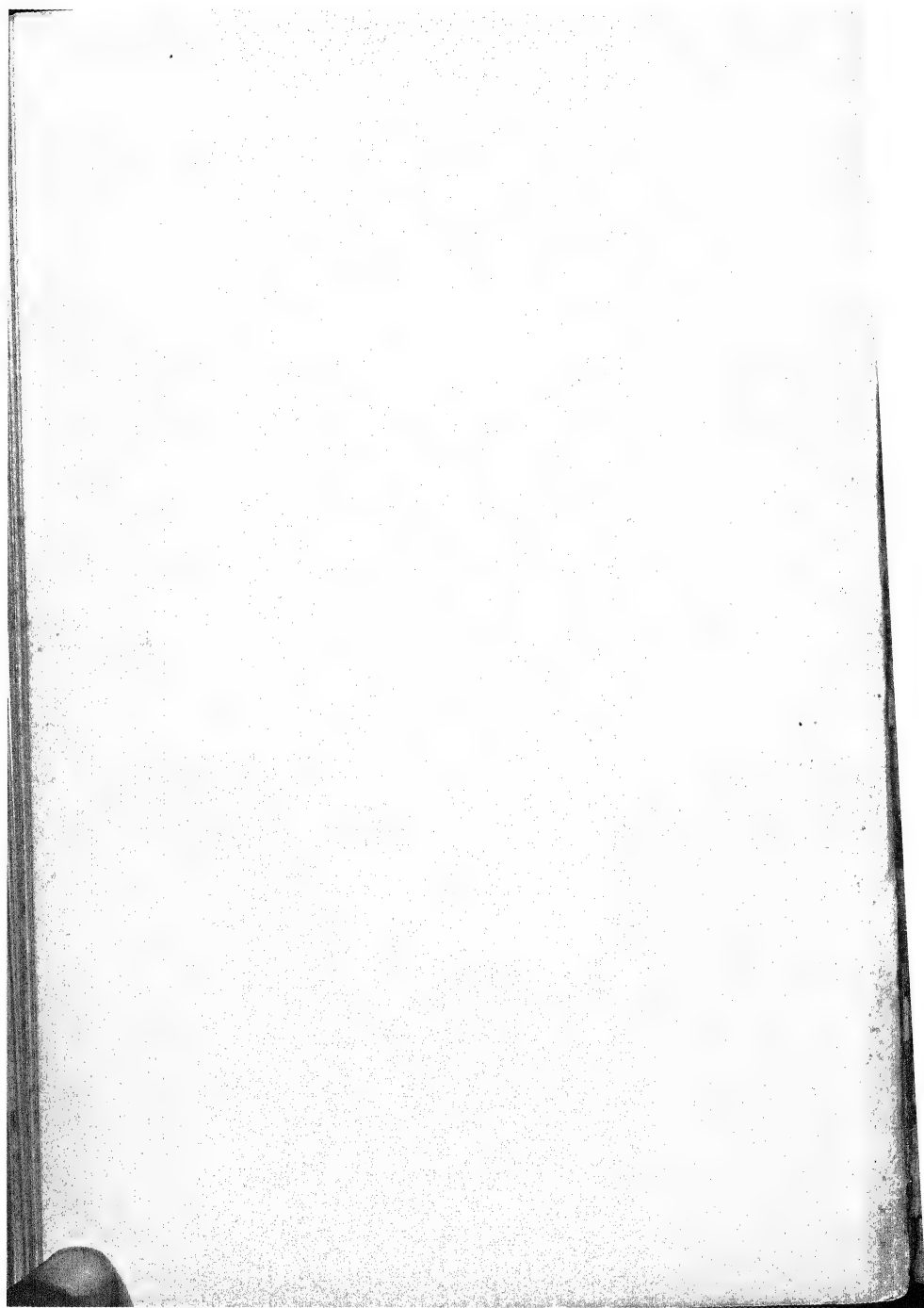
The whole character of the ritual may be summed up by saying that it is a means to awaken the slumbering *Sakti*, the sensational self of the worshipper, so that he may realise his Real Self (*Siva-Sakti*).

I shall show the connection of this psychology of religious ritual with art later. Meanwhile, it may be said that the formal elucidation in the *Tantra* of the theory of religious worship which had, as we have seen, been originally put forward in the *Brahmanas*, and which had been vaguely understood though universally practised ever since, is of the utmost importance, because it is a definite statement of the kind of ceremonial which it is suggested was employed by the artist, in the *Silpa-shastras* (art-treatises).



II

THE AESTHETIC HYPOTHESIS



THE AESTHETIC HYPOTHESIS

THE Hindu view of art proper may be said to lie in the aesthetic conception of *rasa*. A work of art may be said to be *rasavant* (a derivative adjective of *rasa*, meaning "having *rasa*"); the critic, connoisseur, or spectator who enjoys *rasa* may be called *rasika*; the act in and through which the aesthetic emotion is enjoyed or contemplated may be technically styled *rasavadana*.

A consideration of the sense in which the word *rasa* was used in the Vedas and the Upanishads might well prepare the way for the elucidation of its meaning in the hands of the rhetoricians and writers on poetics.

The word occurs in the *Rig-Veda* in the sense of juice (of the soma plant).¹ It is also used in the earlier hymns to signify water and milk.² And sometimes it is applied to mean flavour.³ In the *Atharva-Veda*, *rasa* is used, not only in its earlier meaning as the juice of plants and herbs, but is also applied to the sap of grain,⁴ and although it has come less to signify water and milk, one very interesting and important notion has become connected with it—that of "savour" or "taste." For instance the poet prays:

"May the satisfying savour of the honey mixed come to me."⁵

During the Upanishadic times the meaning of

¹ IX. 63. 13. and IX. 65. 15.

² VIII. 72. 13.

³ V. 44. 13.

⁴ III. 31. 10.

⁵ III. 13. 15.

rasa developed, like that of most other Vedic conceptions, from the particular to the universal. From its signification as the essential element in concrete plants, grain, water, and milk, it has come to be an abstract idea of "essential element," or "essence."¹ For instance:

"Life breath or the vital air is the essence of the limbs."

It still continued, however, to be used for "savour" and "taste."² The philosophers declared that man "knows the taste by the tongue," and the word became a denominative verb, "to taste."³ In the *Taittiriya* and the *Maiterya* Upanishads a great step forward was taken by the fusion of *rasa* as essence with a new meaning—the highest state of joy, an expression of the nature of the Supreme Being as reflected in the "self-luminous consciousness" of the Upanishadic seer.

"He is *Rasa*, having obtained Him the soul becomes full of bliss."⁴

Ananda Vardhana, a writer on poetics, refers to the second chapter of the *Ramayana* in support of his contention that the notion of *rasa* first came to be applied to literature through the poet Valmiki. The story is related that Valmiki was out one day gathering sacrificial wood and grass in the forest when he saw a pair of Karunca birds joyfully twittering as they sat on the branch of a tree. An arrow came that very instant from an invisible

¹ *Brh. Up.*, I. 3. 19.

³ *Prasna. Up.*, IV. 2.

² *Ibid.*, III. 2. 4.

⁴ *Taittiriya Up.*, II. 7.

hunter and struck the male bird, which instantly fell. The sage was filled with immense grief to reflect that only a moment ago the poor creature was happily singing, and now it lay dead in the dust, while its companion fluttered about it shrieking with anguish. Long did the incident trouble Valmiki's mind that day, and the poignant tragedy lay heavy on his heart till he burst out in an ecstatic verse of exquisite melody and pathos, and became lost in the forgetfulness of pure bliss. This was the first *sloka* (verse) invented. The poet tried later introspectively to analyse the whole state of his mind from the moment when the original feeling arose to the time when he attained the boundless joy, and arrived at the conclusion that "that which proceeded from me who was overpowered by pathos shall be nothing but poetry or rhythmic expression"—*rasa*.

According to Ananda Vardhana, the various steps in the process which led to the utterance of rhythmic expression by Valmiki are: (1) the perceptual experience of the event; (2) the transference of the perceptual experience to the imagination, as the cause of that feeling of pathos which translated itself into, (3) the outburst of poetry, and led to (4) the attainment of pure joy. This last blissful state Ananda Vardhana regarded as the feeling which poetry, or any sort of rhythmic expression, should evoke in the mind of the critic.

The science of poetry, which started when Valmiki analysed the nature of his rhythmic expression, came to be known as *Alamkara-shastra*, or *Sahitya-shastra*.

The first title means the science of the beautiful expression of the beautiful; the literal meaning of the second is that the science of the expression of beauty is the true companion of the soul. The systematic development of this science went on for nearly two thousand years, i.e. from before the Christian era to the eighteenth century, and there are accounted some eight hundred and seventy-two major works on the aesthetics of poetry. But as my chief concern here is to explain the theory of *rasa* in its relation to art, I will not go into a detailed survey of all these books on poetics, but merely give an exposition of the meaning of *rasa*, the way it comes to be, and what its implications are when applied to a work of art.

What then is *rasa*, and how exactly is it evoked?

At the outset, it must be noted that it is difficult, if not impossible, to define the word *rasa* positively, because the conception implied in it is intuitively realised rather than sensibly experienced, but from its elaborate exposition, analysis, and classification by the sage Bharta in his *Natya-shastra*, in the various text-books culled from his pages, and in the commentaries based on him, its meaning may be suggested by saying that it is that state of bliss through the realisation of the inner worlds of faculty and experience which is aroused by the spectacle (dramatic, acrobatic, plastic, or pictorial) of a rhythmic expression and controlled emotion.

In an ordinary way it may be said to be caused by a work of art produced by the deliberate manipula-

tion by an artist or poet of the emotions or feelings which formed the inspirational centre of his or her consciousness after he or she had envisaged a certain aspect or aspects of the universe. Let me illustrate the point by considering the history of a work of art. (1) The poet or the artist has been stirred, say, by the sight or thought of lovers embracing each other into recognising the presence of a feeling or emotion of love; (2) he is possessed by this emotion and sees it as a coherent experience with the inner eye; (3) then he translates his internal experience, or his vision, as we may call it, into an external form, by speech if he is an actor, by the written word if he is a writer, by colours if he is a painter; (4) and then is produced (all things being perfectly assimilated) a perfect work of art, embodying the emotion of love, which the spectator or critic who has himself had the experience of being in love, and who retains impressions of that experience, is stimulated into enjoying as an abstract, universal experience, *rasa*, pure joy, irrespective of the emotion in the picture or the poem, or in his own experience.

This is very simply the process by which *rasa* may be evoked, but it is not quite so simple as it looks. For, first of all, the artist never knows when his creation might evoke *rasa* in the critic. Nor, indeed, does he care whether it will evoke that state. He is in love with his theme, and just dedicates himself to render it from sheer abundance of feeling, which makes it impossible for him to contain himself within himself. His work may evoke *rasa* through the

rasika's own capacity to be delighted, "not from the character of the hero to be imitated, nor because the work aims at the production of aesthetic emotion."¹

The demands that an artist must fulfil if his work is to be potentially capable of exciting *rasa* may, however, be noted. The artist is expected to have either a natural or acquired genius for noticing things. That is to say, he must have a very keen receptivity, acutely sensitive to life. And he should have a deep consciousness or vision of the illimitable resources in which he can mirror the Cosmos.²

The *karma* (good and bad deeds) of every man or the race in which he is born as well as the background of his experience determine his genius, but education and training also mould a man's powers. If he has the preliminary capacity to feel intensely, he can be helped to adumbrate the realities which cannot be humanly formulated through means of *Yoga* (contemplation) practices. I shall deal with the *Yoga* method enjoined to artists in the next section. Meanwhile let me notice some other considerations which make a work of art capable of producing *rasa*.

Rasa is a very subtle state, requiring the manipulation of several different kinds of emotion, and a host of feelings into a judicious fusion, before it may be evoked. The Hindu writers on poetics classified emotions into (1) lasting, (2) incidental or transitory. There are eight lasting emotions:

¹ *Dasarupa*, IV. 47.

² "Creation comes from the depths—the mystic will say from God" (E. M. Forster).

(1) *Rati* (love), (2) *Hasa* (laughter), (3) *Soka* (sorrow), (4) *Krodha* (anger), (5) *Utsaha* (high-spiritedness), (6) *Bhaya* (fear), (7) *Jugupsa* (repugnance or disgust), (8) *Vismaya* (astonishment). A ninth class, not generally admitted is *Santa*, is that mental state in which we regard the world as transitory or ephemeral.

Of the incidental emotions there are as many as thirty-three in number: self-disparagement; debility or weakness; apprehension of encountering what is desired and misgivings about obtaining the desired; indolence or aversion to activity; depression due to poverty or pain; painful reflection due to painful memories; perplexity or distraction; recollection; concentration or repose of the mind in contentment; shame or shrinking from pain or censure; unsteadiness or haste in constantly changing from one object to another; joy; agitation or flurry due to pleasant happenings; loss of faculty or activity, meaning disability to do any kind of work; arrogance; despair of success; impatience; drowsiness; possession of the self by a daemonic fancy, or the influence on the self of some astrological phenomena; sleep; waking; impatience of opposition or rivalry; disguise of real feelings; sternness or cruelty; apprehension; sickness; absence of reflection or restraint; death; fear without cause; consideration or discussion.

Emotions, both lasting and transitory, manifest themselves in either of the following ways: (1) they precede or accompany a particular state of mind or body; (2) they appear as the external forms which

indicate the existence of a mental state; and (3) they are involuntarily exhibited by the person who possesses them.

The eight lasting emotions in conjunction with their associated groups of feeling may evoke eight different forms of *rasa*. When we speak of eight different forms of *rasa*, however, we do not mean that *rasa* is either qualitatively or quantitatively divisible into eight species, but these eight are "the various colourings of one experience, and are arbitrary terms of rhetoric used only for convenience in classification; just as we speak of poetry categorically as lyric, epic, dramatic, etc., without implying that poetry is anything but poetry."¹ To enumerate the *rasas* corresponding to the emotions: (1) The emotion of love and the transitory feelings, longing, anxiety, raving, insanity, fever, stupor, death, are bound up with the *Sringara*, or the erotic *rasa*. (2) High-spiritedness and the incidental feelings, assurance, contentment, arrogance, and joy, are the signs of the *Vira*, or the heroic *rasa*. (3) Anger and the attendant feelings, indignation, intoxication, recollection, inconstancy, envy, cruelty, agitation, occur with the *Raudra rasa*, or the *rasa* of fury. (4) Mirth with its accompanying states, indolence, weariness, weakness, stupor, might evoke the *Hasya rasa*, or the *rasa* of comedy. (5) Astonishment and the feelings, joy, agitation, distraction, fright, may arouse the *Adbhuta rasa*, or the *rasa* of wonder. (6) The emotion of sorrow is conducive to the production of

¹ Coomaraswamy, *Dance of Siva*, p. 32.

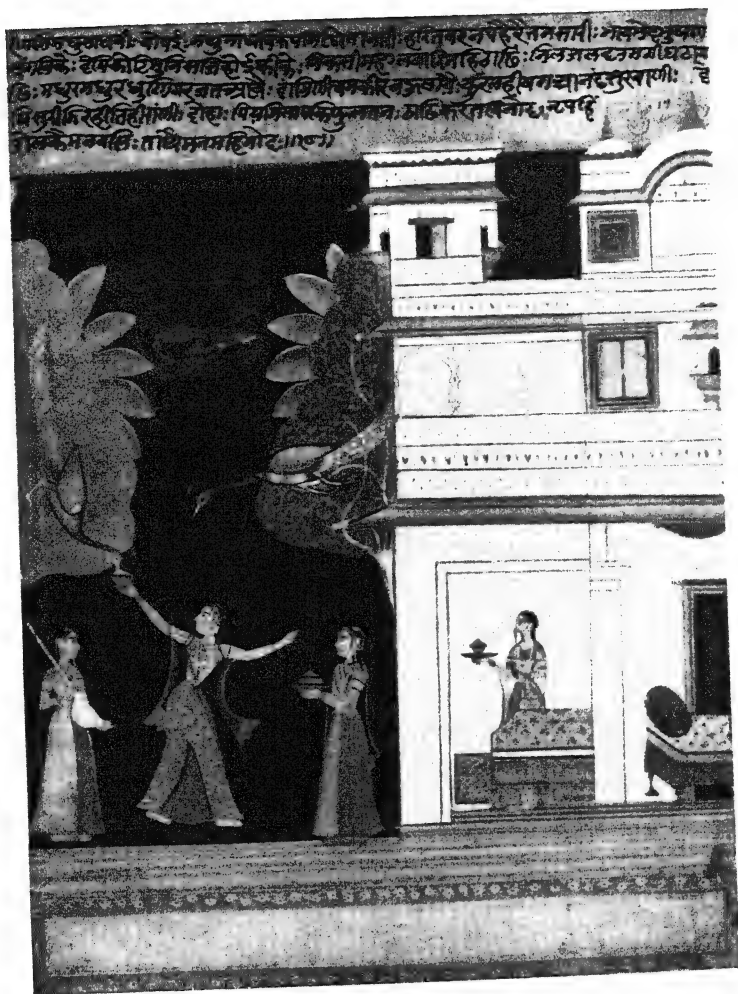
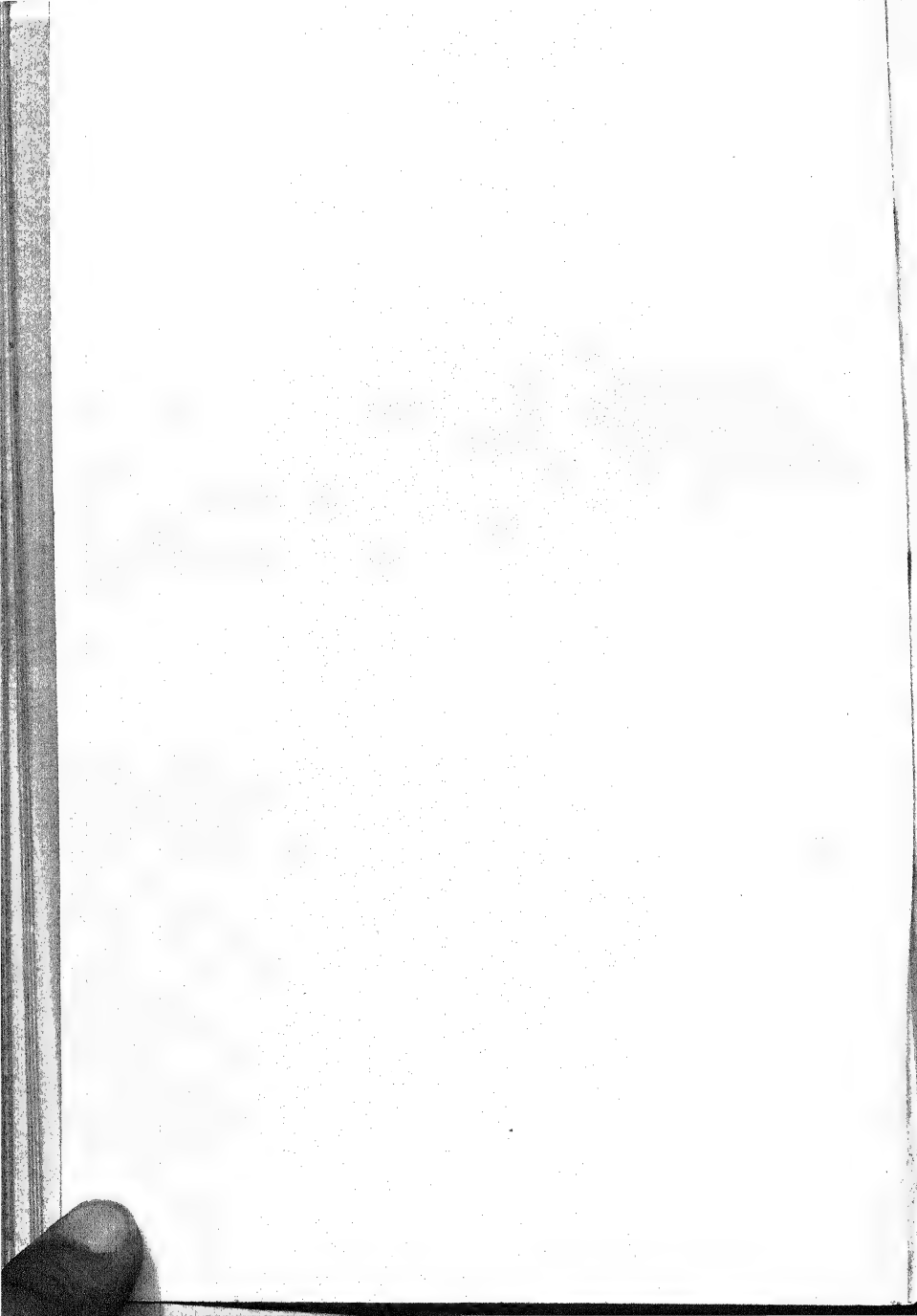


PLATE XIII.—RAGINI

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the *Karunca rasa*, the *rasa* of pathos, so-called from Valmiki's experience of it on seeing the death of the Karunca bird referred to above. (7) Disgust and the ephemeral feelings, agitation, sickness, provoke the *Bibhasta rasa*, or the *rasa* of indignation. The emotion of fear produces the *Bhayanka rasa*, or the *rasa* of terror.¹

The *rasas* are also identified with certain colours and with certain divinities. For instance, *Sringara*, or the erotic *rasa*, is associated with *shamya*, or dark colour, and the god Vishnu; *Hasya*, or the comic *rasa*, with the colour white and the god Rama; *Raudra*, the furious *rasa*, and *Vira*, the heroic *rasa*, go with the colours red and the gods Indra and Rudra respectively; *Karunca*, or the *rasa* of pity, is allied to the grey hue and the god Varuna; *Bhayanka*, or the terrible *rasa*, is ascribed a black colour and the presiding deity *Yama*; *Bibhasta*, or the *rasa* of disgust, is connected with the blue colour and the god Siva, or Mahakala; *Adbhuta*, or the *rasa* of wonder, is assigned a yellow colour and the presiding deity Brahma.²

From the popular practice of representing *Ragas* and *Raginis* (musical modes) through the graphic arts which prevailed in India, it is evident that the

¹ Compare the analysis of emotions and their bearing on art in Sully's *Outlines of Psychology*, and Bain's *English Composition and Rhetoric*, Vol. II. Also Lord Kame's *Elements of Criticism*.

² "It would be vain to deny that certain kinds and tones of colour have a real correspondence with emotional states of mind" (Laurence Binyon).

Hindus firmly believed in the intimate relationship of the various arts in general, and of the graphic art and the art of music in particular. An anecdote on this question from an ancient *Silpa-shastra* (art-treatise) may be illuminating. A king once approached a sage and asked to be taught the methods of image-making. The following dialogue ensued:

KING.

O Sinless One! Be good enough to teach me the methods of image-making.

SAGE.

One who does not know the laws of painting can never understand the laws of image-making.

KING.

Be then good enough, O Sage, to teach me the laws of painting.

SAGE.

But it is difficult to understand the laws of painting without any knowledge of the technique of dancing.

KING.

Kindly instruct me then in the art of dancing.

SAGE.

This is difficult to understand without a thorough knowledge of the laws of instrumental music.

KING.

Pray teach me the laws of instrumental music.

SAGE.

But the laws of instrumental music cannot be learnt without a deep knowledge of the art of vocal music.

KING.

If vocal music be the source and end of all the arts, reveal then to me, O Sage, the laws of vocal music.*

* Reference may here be made to Schopenhauer's view popularised by Pater that "all arts constantly tend to attain the condition of music."

It must be noted that the presence of the above-mentioned permanent emotions among their respective groups of transitory feelings is absolutely essential if *rasa* is to be produced. The failure of the artist to weave the minor feelings into the central theme leads to a lack of unity and incoherence in his work. The sage Bharata says in his *Natya-shastra*:

As a king to his subjects, as a *Master* to his disciples,
Even so the master-motif is the Lord of all other motives.

On no account, however, must a minor-motif be made the master-motif, unless there is a sheer weight of conviction and sincerity behind it, for "the extended development of a transient emotion tends to the absence of *rasa*."¹ That is to say the work becomes sentimental.

Rasa may be evoked by any aspect of life treated by a perfect artist: "delightful or disgusting, exalted or lowly, cruel or kind, obscure or refined, actual or imaginary, there is no subject that cannot evoke *rasa* in man."² But here it must be noted that the treatment of life does not mean the imitation of nature. So far from being an imitation of nature, art is for the Hindus absolutely distinct from it: "In the limitless world of the poet's creation, the poet himself is the creator," says a well-known Indian rhetorician; "it (the world of his creation) lives and moves and has its being as it pleases him." "The poet's speech," says another famous Hindu writer on poetics, "creates a world which is not fettered by

¹ *Dasarupa*, IV. 45.

² *Ibid.*

the laws of nature, which is of the very essence of joy, which is self-existent and not depending on anything else, and which brings into being a creation shining with the nine *rasas*." Art is thus for the Hindus essentially creative.

Of course, the elements from which the artist creates his work of art are taken from nature, but they are the alphabet out of which he moulds by the deliberate exertion of his mind the lines and forms by which he conveys his meaning.¹ If *rasa* is, then, supposed to be evoked by the treatment of life, it is supposed to be created by the deliberate treatment of that aspect of life.² The Hindus carried even further this conception of the deliberateness of art, and maintained that perfect spontaneity in a work of art is attained only by a perfectly deliberate treatment, a treatment that leaves nothing to chance. The actors and the dancers are enjoined, for instance, in a Hindu treatise on Dramaturgy, to cultivate as complete and sure mastery of gesture as the puppet showman possesses over the limbs of his puppets; and the representations of the emotions of the hero to be portrayed should, it is declared, be absolutely mechanical, independent of the actor's or dancer's own feelings or emotions. Hence there is said to be no difference between the actor and the audience, because the actor can enjoy the universal joy of *rasa*

¹ "Beauty is no quality either of trees or pigments, but like every other value only comes into being as the result of a spiritual activity. Its *esse* is *percipi*" (Croce).

² "Art is the deliberate communication of feelings" (Tolstoy).

while he is playing a part in the same impersonal way as the spectators watching him. As Dr. Coomaraswamy renders the point: "If he is moved by what he represents, he is moved as a spectator, and not as an artist. . . . Excellent art wears the airs of perfect spontaneity . . . that is an art which conceals art."¹

That this dictum is no mere theory is borne out by the fact that in the art of dancing and drama the Hindus had developed an exhaustive gesture language in which each little movement of the body was defined as a noun, pronoun, verb and tense, etc., just as ordinary language is defined in grammar. I will quote some of the rules of gesture later. Here I may quote the distinguished authority on Indian art, already referred to so many times, to show how the actual works of Indian art that have come down to us, though apparently spontaneous, are in fact the result of a most careful and defined method. "The Ajanta frescoes," writes Dr. Coomaraswamy, "seem to show unstudied gesture and spontaneous pose, but actually there is hardly a position of the hand or of the body which has not a recognised name and a precise significance. The more deeply we penetrate the technique of any typically oriental art, the more we find what appears to be individual, impulsive, and natural is actually long inherited, well considered, and well bred. Under these conditions life itself becomes a ritual."²

¹ Coomaraswamy and Dugrilla, *The Mirror of Gesture*, pp. 1-10.

² *Ibid.*

On the analogy of a discussion of the degrees of excellence of different kinds of poetry in the various treatises on poetics, a principle might be laid down with regard to the degree of excellence achieved by different forms of art. Just as the highest poetry is that which gives in a beautiful form a message of deep meaning and overloaded significance, so that art is highest which suggests the profoundest vision in the most perfect style. And just as in inferior poetry the sense is lost in an exaggerated ornamentation and over-embroidery, and the result is a charming narrative lacking any very subtle meaning, so in inferior art, mere narrative and description being emphasised, there is a corresponding lack of significance. Therefore, we must guard against the flowery rhetoric of narrative, and descriptive verse and art, and prefer the deep message of a simply wrought subject to the grandiloquent flummery of a work disguised in a scientifically elaborate metre and tricked out with all the hackneyed effusions of high-sounding poetry or "great" art.

The Hindus would seem, to the Western mind steeped in a strong belief in democracy, to expect rather too much from the *rasika*, the critic or the spectator. For *rasa* is enjoyed according to Dharmadatta "only by those who are competent." The ideal spectator is defined by Bharata as "one who is happy when the course of the drama is cheerful, melancholy when it is sorrowful, who rages when it is furious, and trembles when it is

fearful.”¹ In a word, he goes to the theatre to appreciate with sympathy what he sees.

The sensibility of the good critic as well as the artist may be either natural or acquired, or be a happy fusion of the two; but more often than not it is native, inherited through the *karma* (good or bad deeds of past life),² and with difficulty cultivated. Archaeologists or historians of art, like some of the most eager students of poetry, are seen not to have a right perception of *rasa*, and may, indeed, never have it, for instruction is not the purpose of art, but the evocation of joy in a mind potentially capable of realising it. “As for any man of simple intelligence,” writes Dhanamjaya, “who says that from dramas, which distil joy, the gain is knowledge only, as in the case of history and the like, homage to him, for he has averted his face from what is delightful.”³

¹ *Natya-shastra*. “Picture, poetry, and every work of art produce no effect save on souls prepared to receive them” (Croce).

² The Classical Hindu poet, Kalidasa, showed the influence of a man's *karma* (past life) on his capacity to enjoy the things of the present when he said: “The reason why on seeing beautiful objects and hearing harmonies, sounds, even a happy man becomes full of longing and melancholy is that he remembers, without the experience rising to the surface of his working consciousness, the companionships and enjoyments which he had in previous births, and which are an integral portion of his treasury of emotions.”

A similar view was in Rossetti's mind when he wrote:

O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough.

³ *Dasarupa*, I. 6.

Not only must the critic be sympathetic, but he must have a conscious desire to have *rasa* evoked in him. He must exert his imagination to create in himself a state conducive to the enjoyment of art. "Those devoid of imagination, in the theatre, are but as woodwork, the walls and the stones."¹ This point is carried further by Sukracharya (the author of *Sukranitisara*, a sociological text containing a section on the craft of image-making), when he says, "the defects of images are constantly destroyed by the power of the virtue of the worshipper who has his heart always set on God"; and it is resuscitated by the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore: "In our country, those of the audience who are appreciative, are content to perfect the song in their own mind by the force of their own feeling."² And "if this attitude," says Dr. Coomaraswamy, "seems to us dangerously uncritical, that is to say dangerous to art, or rather to accomplishment, let us remember that it prevailed everywhere in all periods of great creative activity, and that the decline of art has always followed the decline of love and faith. Tolerance of an imperfect

¹ *Sahitya Darpana*.

"Some who have cold affections, sluggish imaginations, and no habits of observation can with difficulty discern beauty in anything; while others who are full of kindness and sensibility, and who have been accustomed to attend to all objects around, feel it almost in everything." Jeffrey, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article on "Aesthetics," 9th ed.

² *My Reminiscences*, pp. 134-135.

"If one has not studied things with a partiality full of love, what one thinks about them is not worth saying" (Goethe).

work of art may arise in two ways: the one uncritical, powerfully swayed by the sympathetic, and too easily satisfied with a very inadequate correspondence between content and form; the other creative, very little swayed by considerations of charm, and able by force of the true imagination to complete the correspondence of content and form which is not achieved or not preserved in the original. Uncritical tolerance is prettiness or edification, and recoils from beauty that is "difficult": creative tolerance is indifferent to prettiness or edification, and is able from a mere suggestion, such as an awkward 'primitive' or a broken fragment, to create or re-create a perfect experience."¹

From my reference to the use of the word *rasa* in the Upanishads and the subsequent exposition of the way in which it comes to be, it may have become obvious that this conception of beauty is in the aesthetic world what *Ananda* is in the metaphysical, and *Ishvara* (God) in the religious. That it is really only the religio-philosophical hypothesis in a different dress, designed specifically to fit in with the science of aesthetics, is confirmed by its frequent use in Indian literature interchangeably with its prototype.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad*, it might be recalled,

¹ Coomaraswamy, *Dance of Siva*, p. 34.

"In order to appreciate a masterpiece, we must have some knowledge of the terms which the artist has used and the principles he has followed. We know the terms only when we have ourselves used them and the principles when we have tried to follow them" (a recent European critic).

had said: "He is *Rasa*, having attained Him the soul becomes full of bliss." It is possible that the earliest writers on Poetics knew of this, and consciously desiring to establish their science on the secure foundations of the *sarva-viyda-pralishtha* (the basis of all sciences), as *Brahma-Vidya* (the science of the eternal) the knowledge of *Brahman* or philosophy had come to be known, they adopted the ideal *Ananda* of the mother science as *rasa* to be the ideal of Poetics too. The philosopher of the *Bhagavad-Gita* had indeed made an overture to rhetoricians when he made Sri Krishna, the symbol of the All-pervasive Cosmic Life, say: "I am the splendour of splendid things," and "whatsoever is . . . beautiful . . . understand that thou to go forth from a fragment of my Splendour." Sankracharya, the author of the Vedanta system of pure monism, had declared that "*Brahman* is *rasa*, *rasa* is bliss." And the definitions of *rasa* throughout the literature on poetics and rhetorics echo these statements. For instance, Visvanatha says in the *Sahitya Darpana*: "It (*rasa*) is pure, indivisible, self-manifested, compounded equally of joy and consciousness, free of admixture with any other perceptions, the very twin brother of mystic experience (*Brahmasavadana Sahodarah*) and the very life of it is super-sensuous (*lokottra*) wonder."¹ Mammata, another rhetorician, talks of the "joy which is the crown of all the aims of life, which is immediately produced by the relish of *rasa*, and which so fills the

¹ "Beauty belongs to the transcendental and metaphysical order" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*).

mind that one is aware of nothing else." While Jagan-natha is still more explicit: "*Rasa* is that shining forth of the bliss of the soul where the barriers to its self-expression are removed, the bliss being expressed through love and other emotional states."¹ Achutarya would seem to regard it as a mirror of the Cosmos when he says that *rasa* is a reflected bliss—reflected as the beauty of a woman in a polished mirror.²

The metaphysical Absolute was described in the Upanishads as the Ultimate Reality which is "the internal *Atman* of all created things." But, although it permeates the differentiated universe of *maya* (appearance) and we can feel it in the veins of existence, we cannot know it, materially, through the senses. As I have shown above, the same is true of *rasa*. It is an ideal state, a transcendental mode of consciousness, in which the essences of things are intuitively apprehended, by plunging back, as it were, into the *mysterium tremendum* of life, in the manner of the poet who sees the meaning of things by the sudden flash of a vision, or of the philosopher who realises the wholeness of experience in a moment.³ In an ordinary human way the Hindu rhetoricians sought to describe *rasa*, qualitatively and quantitatively, as the Vedic seers described the Absolute

¹ "Beauty is the splendour of being shining from the proportioned parts of matter" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*).

² *Ibid.*

³ "Beauty is inexplicable; it is a hovering, floating, glittering shadow, whose outlines elude the grasp of definition" (Goethe).

ideal of their aspiration, but it is no more definable or provable logically than is the Supreme Reality (*Ananda*). Of it, it may be said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. "God put it into my head, and I cannot put it into yours," says the man who experiences it. "*Rasa*, which by the predominance of *sattvaguna* is full of limitless and spontaneous self-consciousness and bliss, which is free from the taint of intruding objects, which is akin to Brahmic bliss, whose life is super-worldly and of exquisite charm, is enjoyed as a state of union of enjoyer and the enjoyed by fortunate and happy discerners of delight."¹

¹ Visvanatha, *Sahitya Darpana*.

Similar views have been held at different times in Europe. For instance, Plotinus held: "That which sees must be kindred and similar to its object, before it can see it. The eye could never have beheld the Sun, had it not been Sunlike. The mind could never have perceived the beautiful, had it not first become beautiful itself. Everyone must partake of the Divine nature, before he can discern the Divinely beautiful."

Plato, dealing with the laws of beauty in the *Symposium*, says virtually the same thing: "He who would proceed aright in this matter should begin to visit beautiful forms. Soon he will perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another, and then if beauty of form is his general pursuit how foolish would he be not to recognise that beauty in every form is one and the same. And when he perceives this he will become a lover of all beautiful forms, and next he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of things. . . . At length the vision will be revealed to him of a single science which is the science of beauty everywhere . . . a thing of wondrous beauty which is everlasting, not growing

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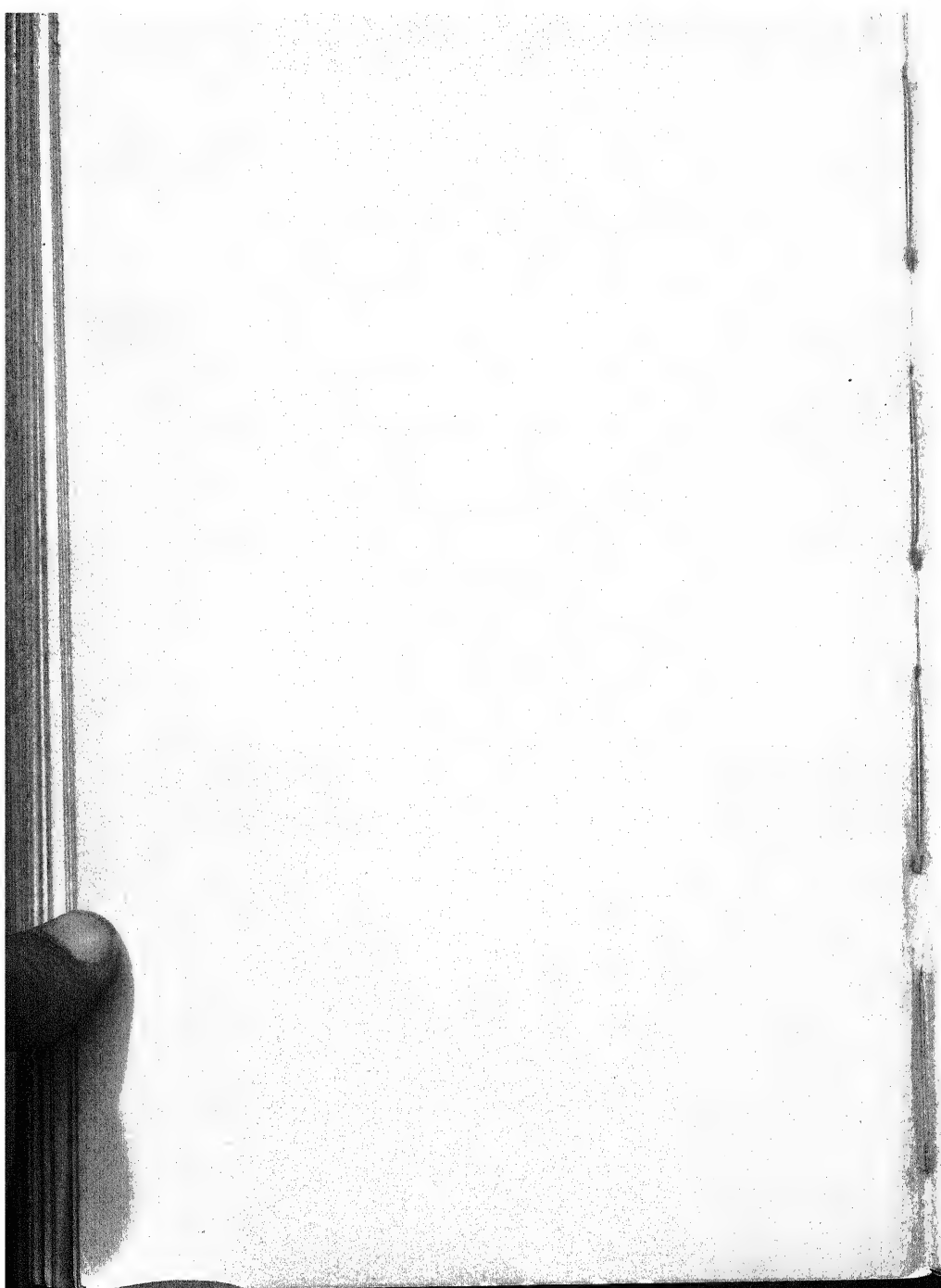
or decaying nor waxing nor waning . . . but beauty Absolute, Separate, Simple, and Ever-lasting, which without diminution and without increase is imparted to the evergrowing and perishing beauties of all other things. . . . He learns to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards; going from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, he arrives at the notion of Absolute Beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. . . . If man has ever eyes to see true beauty he becomes a friend of God and Immortal."

In the *Phaedrus* Plato declares Absolute Beauty to be "a super-sensuous, spiritual essence which is discerned by the mind when thrown into ecstasy."

Among the modern writers on aesthetics both Kant and Hegel would seem to echo a view identical with the Hindu: "The beautiful," says the former, "is that which gives pleasure universally without a concept" (a concept being for him a form imposed by the faculty of judgment upon sense-data, making such sense-data knowable). "The outward shape by which the content is made perceptible," declares the latter, "is merely for the sake of the mind and the spirit."

III

PRINCIPLES OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE



PRINCIPLES OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE

(1)

So far I have been concerned to bring out the aesthetic implications of the Hindu religio-philosophical idealism in its various moods and to present the central doctrine of that idealism in its disguise as the Hindu view of art proper. I come now to treat of the practical rules laid down in the *Silpa-shastras* (art-treatises) for the realisation of the supreme ideal of beauty which I have defined as the goal of Hindu art.

The way in which art seeks to realise this ideal is, of course, indirectly, that is to say in the service of religion. As religion is for the Hindus only a way of philosophy, art becomes for them simply a way of illustrating the central truth of religion and philosophy.

Three arts have in Indian history been thus the handmaids of religion: (1) architecture; (2) image-making; (3) painting. Around all these a vast body of technical literature early grew up. Research into this literature is still in its infancy, it being extremely difficult to assign the individual authorship of the various *Silpa-shastras* (art-treatises), to fix the dates in which they were written, or to determine the exact character of many of the precepts contained in them.

Among the authors mentioned as responsible for these books are mythical and half-mythical sages. Some of their compositions are sometimes ascribed

to hoary antiquity, while others belong to more recent times.

But if we refuse to concern ourselves overmuch with the lives of the learned dictators of these laws about practical aesthetics, and ignore the demands of a rigid chronology as a concession to the oriental historian's fancy, the art-treatises reveal three fairly comprehensive systems of laws as they have come down to us: (1) the laws of architecture; (2) the laws concerning images; (3) the laws about painting. Without going into the multifarious details of all these laws I shall select here for consideration the main rules. For convenience of exposition I shall take first the rules concerning the making of images.

Before I actually treat of the canon, however, it will be well to note the character of the Indian craftsman according to the *Silpa-shastras*, and the nature of the *Yoga* method of contemplation, which, although the ordinary method of Hindu religious worship, was particularly enjoined to be practised by all artisans, whether architects, image-makers, or painters, so that they might elaborate the mental vision of their work before they set out to perform the task of technical elaboration.

IN the preliminary section of this book I have noted that the *Silpin*, *Sthapati*, *Karma-ra*, *Rupa-kara*, *Chitra-kara*, as the Indian artist was called, resembled the European manual worker, artisan, or craftsman generally. It may here be observed that he also differed from the average European manual-worker in certain fundamental respects. For, first of all, he often practised a variety of arts at once, an architect, for instance, being also a sculptor, bronze-founder, gold-, silver-, and copper-smith. Then, unlike most European workers, he was not merely an executant; and, unlike a modern architect, he was not solely a designer, but both designer and executant in one.

Another vital difference between the Indian and the European craftsman is determined by the former's place in society as a servant of the temple, and his attitude both towards his religion and to his work.

It is probable that in the early history of Indian art the priest himself was artist and brought the inspiration and the fecundation of the soul to the making of sacred objects. Later he seems to have relegated his function as artist to guilds of artisans and craftsmen who became attached to the temple and often lived in a colony near it in order to be in the vicinity of the shrine at which they worshipped, and in the service of which they carried out their professional duties.

The Indian craftsman was well versed in the subtleties of the higher religion of philosophy, and believing in a Supreme God brought all the fire of his faith in a philosophically defined Divinity and his knowledge of speculative thought to bear upon the sacred task of rendering explicit the implications of the Cosmic Life. In order to sustain his vocation on the secure foundations of religion and to give it an exalted place in the scheme of Hindu social life, he traced the descent of his caste from "Visva-karma, Lord of the Arts, master of a thousand handicrafts, carpenter of the gods, and builder of their palaces divine, fashioner of every jewel, first of craftsmen, by whose art men live, and whom, a great and deathless god, they continually worship."¹ The five sons of this god (who is only the Supreme God defined specifically to be honoured as the presiding deity of the artisans) are claimed to have been the first blacksmith, the first carpenter, the first founder, the first mason, the first goldsmith, variously, and the succeeding generations of craftsmen are supposed to be their progeny.

Like most other myths consciously invented to make abstruse philosophical theories interesting and easily intelligible to those for whom, as I have constantly said, it is much easier to love than to know, this myth has very far-reaching consequences. The Indian craftsmen, whether the most sophisticated priest-artists or simple manual workers, were enabled by this picturesque story to comprehend

¹ *Mahabharata*.

that since the Supreme God in the form of Visvakarma, the artist-craftsman of heaven, was the founder of the arts and bequeathed His knowledge to His first five human artisan-sons (the ancestors of all succeeding craftsmen), Divine skill had been preserved intact in their families and caste through the laws of heredity. And the fact that the Supreme God was generally understood not only to be the first practitioner of the crafts, but also the ideal practitioner, the ideal craftsman, crystallising Absolute Beauty, Absolute Rhythm, Absolute Proportion in Himself and in His work, supplied the artisans a model to live up to, and raised the pursuit of their art above the eccentricity of particular individual and limited ideas of beauty to an acknowledged universal ideal, which is philosophically and aesthetically the highest, the broadest, the most comprehensive view of order that the human mind in all countries and among all nations has been able to think of and formulate when strained to its utmost resources. With all the simplicity of his faith the Indian artisan sought thus, through the Divine Visvakarma, to gain, if he could, one little glimpse of the inmost essence of all things, he strove to suggest some vaguest hints of Reality, so that he himself and yearning humanity might in some small way be helped to overcome the obstacles presented by their finitude in the way of the realisation of the Infinite.

Those who know how extraordinary is the effect of a deep consciousness on a man's art will not

doubt that although the Indian craftsman was like any other citizen and not a peculiar person *qua* artist, he often cultivated a profound vision and a faultless technique by the intense religiosity of his nature and raised his work from the static elements of his material to be the bearer of an ecstatic message—the vehicle of a prophecy. Because his vocation was hereditary (and what a noble heredity it must seem to a man who believes he is descended from God!), he inherited the deep consciousness of his race, and he learnt the laws of the outer world so that he might be the better able to inscribe the potentialities of his soul upon the walls of his age. Because he had a hereditary bent for and acquired exceptional skill in his work, he became a sort of celestial exile—an inspired master-builder who sought to intensify the faculties of his inheritance with the experience of the earth and the traditional laws of his craft, so that he might infuse the fire of Divine Omniscience into the tabernacle of the body.

The *Silpa-shastras* (art-treatises), which lay down the canon for his instruction in the technical task of evoking the vast hidden mystery of the universe into the objectivity of forms and images, presumed him thus to be an ordinary but an honest God-fearing man, who possessed a certain innate propensity for, and potential capacity to learn, his craft, the cultivation of which religiously might eventually make him a master, and endow him with prophetic fingers: "The *Silpin*," it is declared in one of these treatises, "should understand the *Atharva-Veda*,

the thirty-two *Silpa-shastras*, and the Vedic *mantras* (hymns) by which the deities are invoked. He should be one who wears a sacred thread, a necklace of holy beads and a ring of Kusa grass on his finger; delighting in the worship of God, faithful to his wife, avoiding strange women, piously acquiring a knowledge of the various sciences, such a one is, indeed, a craftsman."¹ In another place it is said that the painter must be no sluggard, not given to anger, holy, learned, self-controlled, devout, and charitable; such should be his character."²

¹ "A Tamil *Silpa-shastra*," translated by Kearns, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. V, 1876.

² Grunwedel, *Mythologie des Buddhismus*, p. 192.

A similar spirit and attitude to his work was recommended to and adopted by the mediaeval artists. "The artist is subject, in the sphere of his art, to a kind of asceticism, which may require heroic sacrifices. He must be fundamentally in the direct line as regards the end of his art, for ever on his guard not only against the vulgar attractions of easy execution and success, and against the slightest relaxation of his interior effort, for habits diminish, if unexercised, and ever so much more by any careless exercise not proportionate to their intensity. The artist must suffer sleepless nights, purify himself without ceasing, voluntarily abandon fertile places for barren places, full of insecurity. In a certain sphere and from a particular point of view, in the sphere of making and from the point of view of the good of the work, he must be humble and magnanimous, prudent, upright, strong, temperate, simple, pure, ingenuous. All these virtues which the saints possess *simpliciter*, purely and simply, and in the line of the Sovereign Good, must inform the artist *secundum quid*, in a certain relation, in a line apart, extra-human if not inhuman. So he easily assumes the tone of a moralist when speaking or writing about his art, and he is well aware that he has

The high spirituality of the Indian artist, of which I have been speaking, must not, however, lead the reader into neglecting what it has been the great contribution of Sir William Rothenstein to have made clear to students of Indian art—the Indian artist's skill. Nowhere is it more true than in India that art is both content and form, conception and execution. If the Indian artists were essentially the bearers of a message, a prophecy, they were also essentially the skilful bearers of that message or prophecy. If it was the deep religiosity of their mental outlook that enabled them to conceive the the Reality behind appearance, it was also their a virtue to preserve. 'We shelter an angel whom we never cease to offend. We ought to be the guardians of that angel. Shelter your virtue carefully. . . .'" (Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*.)

"David, the most excellent of prophets . . . collecting himself with all the attention of his mind to the love of his creator, uttered this saying among others: 'Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house.' And albeit a man of so deep an understanding, called this house the habitation of the court of heaven, wherein God presideth over the hymning choirs of angels in glory that cannot be told . . . yet it is certain that he desired the adornment of the material house of God, which is the house of prayer . . . wherefore most beloved son, make thou no long delay, but believe in full faith that the spirit of God hath filled thine heart when thou hast adorned His house with so great beauty and such great comeliness. . . . Work, therefore, now, good man, happy in this life before God's face and man's, and happier still in the life to come, by whose labour and zeal so many burnt offerings are devoted to God! Kindle thyself to a still ampler art, and set thyself with all the might of thy soul to complete that which is yet lacking in the gear of the Lord's house, without which

intimate knowledge of appearance which helped them to translate that Reality into form. That this fact was emphatically recognised is clear from the following remark which the Hindus (so fond of claiming Divine authority for everything) put into the mouth of Maha-deva (Siva) in his discourse with Parvati (Sakti): "All is fruitless, the repeating of *mantras* (prayers), and the telling of beads, austerities and devotion, unless one has gained the knowledge of the *Varnas* (colours)—the true significance of lettering, the lustre and the virtue of figures."¹ Another Hindu text lays down that "one who knows amiss his craft . . . after his death will fall into hell and suffer."² An artist may have the vision and not the technique, and then, according to the Hindus, he is as unfortunate as a skilled workman without a vision.

the Divine mysteries and ministries of God's service may not stand; such as chalices, candelabra, thuribles, chrism-vases, crewets, shrines for holy relics, crosses, missals, and suchlike, which the necessary use of the ecclesiastical order requireth. Which if thou wouldst fashion, begin after the manner following." Prologue to a treatise on painting, enamelling, metal-working, and other crafts written by a monk named Theophilus, eleventh or twelfth century (Coulton, *Mediaeval Garner*, p. 166. See also Laurie, *Materials of the Painter's Craft*).

Reference may here be made to the profound saying, *labore est orare*, and Carlyle's comment on it: "I find that a man cannot make a pair of shoes rightly unless he does it in a devout manner; no man is ever paid for his real work or should ever expect to be paid. All work properly so-called is an appeal from the seen to the Unseen—a devout calling on the Higher powers; and unless they stand by us, it will not be a work, but be a quackery."

¹ *Bharata-natyashastra*.

² *Mayamatya*.

Since the conscious function of the Indian artisans attached to the temples (at least so far as painting and sculpture are concerned) was the portrayal of the Divinity, of a Divinity who is philosophically super-sensuous, Infinite, Unconditioned, and Absolute, difficulties were sure to arise in the technical task of representing Him. These difficulties were solved, as I have previously hinted, by the elaboration through *Yoga* (contemplation) of mental conceptions of the Supreme Being in His various aspects and manifestations.

How exactly was *Yoga* used in art to elaborate these mental conceptions of the Supreme Being? I have already partly suggested the answer to this question by urging that since art, specially that of sculpture and painting, is concerned to make images of God to serve the ends of religious worship, and *Yoga*-contemplation is primarily an act of religious worship, art employs *Yoga*-contemplation to elaborate mental conceptions of God more or less as they are used in religious worship. I have referred to the place of *Yoga*-contemplation in the scheme of Hindu religious ritual, and here I shall recapitulate both the principle and the process of that ritual in order to give a more coherent view of the highly important practice of *Yoga* by Hindu artists.

We have seen that the fundamental postulate of Hindu religion and philosophy is that Reality or God is an infinite unconditioned state of Being, always One and at peace, and that the world is a continual process of becoming or change, the moving

thing, conditioned by the relativity of space, time, matter, and motion. God or Being is Perfect Experience, the world or becoming is incomplete or relative dualistic experience. The method of reaching God or Perfect Experience is through the exercise of *Yoga*-worship.

The necessity of this method is explained by the fact that the desire of man to attain God is obstructed by the sheaths or veils which God or the Higher Self of man has put on Itself during the process of its manifestation or creation in the universe. There are three such sheaths which enshroud humanity in the darkness of limitations: (1) the sheath of matter and sensual pleasure; (2) the sheath of energy with its lure of activity; (3) the sheath of mentality with its pride of rational thought. It is only when man penetrates these three sheaths and rises to the fourth sheath of intuition that he is emancipated from the world, and attains the sheath of Joy, Pure Bliss, God.

In the history of man's spiritual life, the first two sheaths are often easily torn, but the sheath of mentality with its pride of reason is made of rather thicker skin. In apprehending things the mind takes the forms of the objects it apprehends, that is to say it acquires the habits of its environment, becomes familiar with its new surroundings, thus adding on to its originally pure and real self more and more layers of illusory experience. Yet by "constant labour and passionlessness it may be held in check." This is to be secured through *Yoga*-contemplation,

which is a way, as Patanjali, the great Hindu philosopher, called it, of the "repression of the (lower) activities of the understanding." For thus the mind can be attuned by introspective analysis of its formal aspects to realise its essential form, i.e. to rise from the limitations of illusory experience which it has created to a realisation of its Higher Self, God.

Now since it is by meditating on the intellectual self that one realises the Higher Self, God, the Hindus recommend continued thought, prayer, or concentration and other ritual, to effect the exaltation of the worshipper into the Transcendental Self or Godhead. But Transcendental Experience is Infinite and Unconditioned and "fickle is the mind (of man), froward, forceful, and stiff—as hard to check as is the wind." Hence, to accommodate the Infinite to the capacity of finite minds, it is enjoined to worship God through the contemplation of its comprehensible aspects, such as Siva, the symbol of Cosmic Rhythm, Krishna dancing with the *gopis* (maids) signifying the relation of God, the Universal Soul, to the human souls.

Mental and physical representations of these are thus invented as symbols to serve as *via media* to concentrate attention on the abstract Universal Soul or God. These symbols are called *Pratima* or *Pratika*. According as physical or mental symbols are worshipped, the worship is called "gross" or "subtle," the term "gross" being used not in a deprecatory but in a descriptive sense and the only difference between the two modes of worship being that in the "gross" worship no call is made on the imagination, an

image of three dimensions being worshipped by physical acts such as bodily prostrations and offerings of real flowers, etc., subtle worship being conducted through imaginary conceptions of the Deity given in the *dhyana-mantras* (mental conceptions) of God in the Hindu holy books.

It is, then, with the necessity that the human beings find to accommodate the Infinite Soul to the capacity of their finite minds that religion chiefly requires the services of the arts of sculpture and painting, for images must be used for the convenience of the worshipper.

As we have seen early in the Vedic Age, this elaborate psychology of religious ritual was understood and philosophical symbols were invented to be used in worship. The first symbols worshipped in India were very simple. A stone or golden egg symbolised the first germ or the egg of the universe. It was placed under a tree which, with its outstretched branches, represented the All-embracing Cosmic Spirit in the universe, and an image of a snake carved on stone was placed near the egg to signify the incarnation and reincarnation of the human soul, the passage of which was supposed to be as "curvy" as the body of a snake.

In the Epic Age the *dhyana-mantras* (mental pictures of God in His various aspects) given in the Vedic hymns and elsewhere began to be translated into concrete shapes and forms, and with these before them the worshippers practised contemplation to attain *Yoga* (union) with God.

When the artist had to translate these *dhyana-mantras* (mental conceptions) into forms for the purpose of worship in the temple, it was found convenient by the lawgivers of art to enjoin on him the same process of "subtle" or "gross" *Yoga*-worship which was enjoined on the ordinary worshipper, so that he could perfectly visualise the particular aspect of the Supreme Being which he was concerned to represent before he actually set out to make an image of it.

The general nature of the method used by practising artists was the same both in literature and in art. We have seen how the *Yoga* method was used by Valmiki, the author of the *Ramayana*, when "seating himself with his face towards the East, and sipping water according to the rule (of Hindu religious ritual), he set himself to *Yoga*-contemplation of his theme. By virtue of his *Yoga*-power he clearly saw before himself, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, and Dasaratha, together with his wives, in his kingdom, laughing, talking, acting and moving as if in real life . . . by *Yoga*-power that righteous one beheld all that had come to pass and all that was to come to pass in the future, like a nelli fruit (*phyllanthus emblica*, denoting clear insight) on the palm of his hand. And having truly seen all by virtue of his concentration, the generous sage began the setting forth of the history of Rama."

We have a glimpse of the actual process of *Yoga* (contemplation), as employed by artists, in a Buddhist *Tantra* of about the twelfth century A.D. from

which M. Foucher has culled the following account summarised by Dr. Coomaraswamy: "The artist is enjoined to proceed to a solitary place after purificatory ablutions and wearing newly washed garments. There he is to perform the sevenfold office, beginning with the invocation of the hosts of the Buddhas and Bodhistavas in an open space before him, and the offerings of the real or imaginary flowers, and ending with a dedication of the merit acquired to the welfare of all beings. Then he has to realise in thought the four infinite qualities (love, compassion, sympathy, same-sightedness). Then he must meditate on the original purity of the first principle of things, and on what comes to the same thing, their emptiness or absolute non-existence. By the fire of the idea of emptiness there are destroyed beyond discovery the five elements which compose the individual consciousness. Only when the personality of the individual is thus set aside is he able to invoke the Deity, which last condition is strictly enjoined. For complete comprehension is only possible when the consciousness is thus identified with an object of cognition. All this takes place in the imagination. The Divinity appears 'like a reflection,' or 'as in a dream.' Very rarely, indeed, is any drawing made use of, even in the most complicated conceptions, where the principal personage to be represented is surrounded in the centre of a *mandala* (shrine). It is only when the mental image is thus defined that the artist begins to mould or paint."

The essentials of the *Yoga* method from the artist's

point of view, when shorn of the unnecessary details with which they are connected by the author of the *Tantra*, are: (1) self-purification by an artist in order more easily to set aside the sheaths of the lower self; (2) the identification of the artist with the mental picture of the God, the Higher Self, that being the concept he has in mind to execute; (3) the definition of this mental conception vividly.

The actual making of an image by the Hindu artist would involve some such process as this: The artist performs purificatory ablutions and sits down to focus his attention on such a *dhyana-mantra* (mental picture) of the Supreme Being as signifies His Cosmic Rhythm in the Dance of Siva:

The dancing foot, the sound of tinkling bells,
The songs that are sung, and the various steps,
The forms assumed by the Lord as he dances,
Discover these in your hearts, so shall your bonds be
broken.

He then offers flowers, incense, and other gifts to the form conceived. The mental picture is thus seen in all its details and the work of art is complete in the mind before being translated into form. The artist then begins the task of technical elaboration, during which time he must hold fast to the conception evolved through *Yoga* (contemplation), and strain every nerve to translate it perfectly into form.

The kind of mental state designed to be secured through the practice of *Yoga* can also be cultivated by the artisan through tuning up the functions of the body and the mind into a perfect obedience to the

faculty of intuition and through the deliberate invocation of dreams or reveries. The relaxation of the body and mind helps to evoke the intuitive faculty, while "dwelling on the knowledge that presents itself in dream or sleep" is recommended by Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga* system, as a means of realising the vision desired. And, as we have seen, in the *Agni-purana*, the imager is advised, on the night previous to starting work, to perform purificatory ablutions, and on going to bed to pray:

O thou Lord of all gods, teach me in dreams how to carry out all the work I have in mind.¹

¹ For a fuller discussion of the application of *Yoga* to art, see Zimmer's *Kunstform und Yoga im Indischen Kultbild*.

That the principle involved in the processes described above is not peculiar to the Hindus alone, but has prevailed elsewhere, too, may be obvious if I refer to some European authorities.

The ecstatic trances of mediaeval Christian artists seem to me to have been nothing if not uncontrolled *Yoga*. Of the main element of *Yoga*-worship, i.e. the concentration by the artist upon God in prayer before setting about his work, there are numerous analogies in mediaeval literature. I take a typical instance from Peter Calo, *Vita Sancti Thomae Aquinatus*: "After the death of the Doctor, Brother Reginald, having returned to Naples and resumed his lectures, exclaimed with many tears: 'My brothers, while he was still in life, my master forbade me to disclose the admirable thing concerning him whereof I had been witness. One of those things was that he had acquired his science not only by human industry, but by the merit of prayer, for whenever he wished to study, discuss, read, write, or dictate, he first had recourse to prayer in private, and poured forth his soul in tears in order to discover the

*Continuation of note]**

Divine secret, and by the merit of this prayer his doubts were removed and he issued therefrom fully instructed.'"

M. Jacques Maritain confirms the similarity of attitude disclosed by the above passage to what I have said of the Hindu view: "The work of art has been kneaded and prepared, formed, brooded over, and matured in a mind before emerging into matter" (*Art and Scholasticism*, p. 7).

Most contemporary artists would if interrogated about their methods of work disclose that they unconsciously employ the method of *Yoga* (contemplation) themselves. The testimony that such a modern artist as Rodin used to hold seances to realise his work mentally before he began to mould his statues is significant. And the general modern European aesthetics as represented by Croce points to the same truth: "The true artist never makes a stroke with his brush without having previously seen it with his imagination."

The researches of psycho-analysis in regard to the problem of artistic creation bear out the same theory. For instance, Dr. Jung, in his *Psychology of the Unconscious*, describes the one-pointedness of mental concentration as a preliminary to undertaking a work of art "as the willed introversion of a creative mind, which, retreating before its own problem and inwardly collecting its own forces, dips at least for a moment into the sources of life, in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother before the completion of its work."

The Hindus, of course, had reduced the principles of *Yoga* to such exhaustive codes as are contained in Patanjali's *Sutras* and the *Tantra*, and they had defined and regulated its practice to everyday formulas by which the *yogin* state could be deliberately invoked.

FOR "the successful achievement of this *Yoga* (vision in concrete shapes and images) the lineaments of images are described in books (*Silpa-shastras*) to be dwelt on in details."¹ These the artist must observe, for "though it is the devotion of the devotee that causes the manifestation of the image of the Blessed One (God) in this matter of iconography, the procedure of the ancient sages should be followed."² The Hindu ideal of technical beauty is of a "beauty of type, impersonal and aloof,"³ "not an ideal of varied individual beauty, but of formalised and rhythmic."⁴ Hence "only an image made in accordance to the canon can be called beautiful; some may think that beautiful which corresponds to their fancy, but that not in accordance with the canon is unlovely to the discerning eye."⁵

A question arises here as the nature and the scope of the canonical rules laid down in the art-treatises, as it has been asserted that they enslave the artist and debase his art into an empty conventionality.

It seems to me that the objection to the canon is irrelevant and futile. For the rules laid down in the *Silpa-shastras* are to art what algebraic formulas are to the solution of a mathematical problem, or the rules of grammar to the building up of a good

¹ *Sukraniti*.

³ Coomaraswamy, *The Aims of Indian Art*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

style. They were remembered by artisans in the form of mnemonic verses during apprenticeship, as the rules of geometry and algebraic formulas are remembered by students of engineering in European colleges, and were mainly considerations of measurement, form, and design, etc., pertaining to the symbolical expression of philosophical truth. An established symbology was necessary to guard against the danger of inferior craftsmen perverting the look of sacred objects by giving shape to unholy eccentricities and idiosyncracies. This was secured by injunctions which took the form of declaring, for example, that such-and-such an image must have three heads if it is to signify the conception it is meant to signify. No doubt the exact size, the shape, the contour, and other details of the three heads were also laid down. But whether the artisan succeeded in turning out a three-headed figure which was a work of beauty was no more in the power of the Shastras to determine than it is in the power of the laws of grammar to produce a perfect piece of prose, or the rules of surgery to bring about a successful operation.

It has also been urged against the canon that it produces sameness in the work produced according to it. An answer to that may be found in the fact that no two works of Indian art, both of which may have been produced in obedience to the same canon, are ever seen to be like each other.

That the contingency of a prophetic artist inventing new rules to suit his own purposes was adequately recognised by the Hindus is evident from the

following passage of Sukracharya, the author of the *Silpa-shastra Sakraniti*, in which he addresses the spirit of beauty: "These Lakshami are not for thee; these laws that I lay down, these analyses of what an image should be, are for those images that are made to order for people who would worship them. Endless are thy forms! No Shastra can define thee! Nothing can appraise thee."¹

¹ The interpretation of the mediaeval canon given by M. Jacques Maritain in his *Art and Scholasticism* may supplement the view which I have briefly put forward: "The ascertained rules of the Scholastic philosophy are not conventional imperatives imposed on art from without, but the highly concealed ways by which art itself, the working reason, goes to work." "The name technique may be given to the whole collection of these rules; but on condition of amplifying considerably and elevating the ordinary meaning of the word technique. For it is a question not of material processes only, but also and chiefly of the ways and means of proceeding in the intellectual sphere which the artist uses to attain the end of his art. Such ways are determined like paths laid out before through a tangled thicket. But they have to be discovered. And the most elevated of them, those closely approximating to the individuality of the work spiritually conceived by the artist, are strictly personal to him and discoverable by one individual only." "Every artist is well aware that if the intellectual form ceases to determine his matter, his art would be a mere sensual confusion." Maritain further calls in the evidence of Baudelaire to illustrate the point: "It is clear that systems of rhetoric and prosodies are not forms of tyranny arbitrarily devised, but a collection of rules required by the very organisation of the spiritual being: prosodies and systems of rhetoric have never prevented originality from manifesting itself distinctly. The opposite would be far more true, that they have assisted the development of originality." With the habit or virtue of art exalting his

To come to the canon about the making of images, it may be noted that they are scattered about in different *Silpa-shastras*, written in different parts of India. Six *Silpa-shastras*, the *Brihatsamhita*, the *Sukra-niti-sara*, the *Vishnudharmottaram*, the *Mat-sya-puranam*, the *Agni-puranam*, the *Mayasastram*, the *Pratima-manalakhshanam*, lay down, however, more or less comprehensive systems. While I shall have generally all these in mind, I propose to note the measurements laid down in the *Sukraniti* as a representative collection.

"Images are made of sand, paste, enamel, earth, stones, woods, and metals."¹ A consideration that might determine the choice of one material in preference to another is what age it is manufactured in. "Images are to be made of gold, silver, copper, bronze, in the *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dvapura*, and *Kaliyuga* respectively."² When the material used is stone, the artist should construct images of white, yellow, red, and black stones according to the ages, but may also exercise his own "option." To the various materials are ascribed certain auspicious qualities for reasons that were perhaps purely local. "An image of wood and of earth gives long life, prosperity, strength, and victory; one cut out of a jewel brings luck, a golden image brings nourish-spirit from within, the artist is a master making use of the slaves to serve his ends; it is foolish to conceive him as the slave of his tools. Properly speaking he possesses and is not possessed by them: he is not held by them, it is he who holds, through them, matter and reality.

¹ *Sukraniti*.

² *Ibid.*

ment, a silver one fame, that of copper increases population, one of stone augurs increase in land."¹

The *Sukraniti* recognises three different kinds of images, *Sattvika*, *Rajasika*, *Tamasika*, corresponding to the three ultimate qualities of reality, *Sattva* (truth), *Rajas* (passion), *Tamas* (gloom). As the possession of these three qualities determines the character of all things, men and gods (the *sattva guna* symbolising calm, clear vision and goodness, the *rajas guna* implying an impure state, attached to desire and immersed in sensational activity, and the *tamas guna* implying inertia, ignorance, and futility), so Sukracharya regards the possession of them by the gods as an appropriate criterion for the classification of their images. "An image of God seated self-contained, in the posture of a *Yogi*, with hands turned as if granting boons and encouragement to his worshippers, surrounded by praying and worshipping Indra and other gods is called a *Sattvik* image." "An image seated on a *vahana* (vehicle) decked with various ornaments, with hands holding weapons, as well as granting boons and encouragement, is called a *Rajasik* image." "A *Tamasik* image is a terrible armed figure fighting and destroying the daemons."²

Another classification of images is: *Nara* (man-god); *Krura* (terrible); *Asura* (daemoniac); *Bala* (infantile); and *Kumara* (juvenile).

Corresponding to all these types there are different ideal scales and proportions in terms of the human body. They are expressly designed for the creation of

¹ *Brihatsamhita*.

² *Sukraniti*.

superhuman types, because, in a terminology that would have shocked the Greeks and would perhaps shock most admirers of the Greek ideal of God conceived in the image of man, as says Sukracharya, "even the misshapen image of a god is to be preferred to that of a man, however attractive the latter may be," for "perchance one (man) in a million has perfect form, perfect beauty."¹

The basic unit is technically styled a *tala* (the measure of the face from the hair on the forehead to the chin). The *tala* is further divided into the following units: one *tala* = twelve *angulas*; one *angula* (or the fourth of the closed fist of a hand) = eight *yabas*; one *yaba* (or a grain of barley corn) = eight *yukas*; one *yuka* = eight *likhyas*; one *likhya* = eight *romagaras*; one *romagara* (the top of a hair) = eight *renus*; one *renu* (ray of the sun) = eight *anus*, an *anus*, being the lowest unit, meaning the ray of the sun stealing through a crevice.

The *Sukraniti* enjoins that the measures appropriate to the various kinds of images should vary with the age during which they are made. For instance, in the *Satyayuga* they are to be ten *talas*; in the *Tretayuga* nine *talas*; in the *Dvaprayuga* eight *talas*; in the *Kaliyuga* seven *talas*. But this prescription is neither followed by the other *Silpa-shastras* nor by the craftsmen. The measure usually adopted was the *nava-tala*, or it varied according to the second of the above-mentioned classifications of images, i.e. *Nara-murti* = ten

¹ *Sukraniti*.

talas; *Krura-murti* = twelve *talas*; *Asura-murti* = sixteen *talas*; *Bala-murti* = five *talas*; *Kumara-murti* = six *talas*. The average human being, from whose norm the superhuman type was deduced, was understood to be *asta-tala*, or eight *talas*, but the most beautiful man is said to be nine *talas*, and the man below the average is computed at seven *talas*. The average female figure is also seven *talas*.

According as different images are made to express particular ideals, they are endowed with certain *asanas*, poses and attitudes: (1) *Samhanga*, equally bent or at equipoise, is the pose prescribed for *sattvick* images, i.e. images which are seated or standing in an attitude of spiritual serenity or poise. (2) *Abhanga*, a slightly bent pose, is assigned to figures standing in meditative repose, often with the weight on one leg. (3) *Ati-bhanga*, a greatly bent attitude, interpreting violent motion or dramatic action, like a tree caught in a storm, is exemplified in South Indian images of Siva as Nataraja, and in the figures of other violent or destructive gods and goddesses. (4) *Tri-bhanga* is an extremely bent stance, similar to *Ati-bhanga*.

Besides the stances and sways of the body which are suggested as the vehicles of spiritual moods and ecstatic raptures, there are certain *mudras*, conventions to interpret the finger plays enjoined in the *Shastras*. These movements, originally suggested in the *Bharata-natya-shastra*, have gone through a process of modification at the hands of artisans and craftsmen all over India. I enumerate here only the



PLATE XV.—GESTURES

*Copies after O. C. Gangoly, executed by
Gala Gabiansky*

most prominent conventions and the leading motifs: (1) the *Kataka-hasta* signifies communication. (2) The *Lola-hasta*, often styled *Lamba-hasta* or *Gaja-hasta*, is "the hand hanging down." (3) The *Tripataka* is the "three-fingered" movement of hands carrying weapons (*ayudhas*), such as an axe (*tanka*) or deer (*Krishna mriga*), etc. (4) The *Varda* and the *Abhaya-hasta* symbolise the "gesture of gifts" and "assurance." (5) The *Nidrita-hasta*, the "sleeping hand," signifies "inaction." (6) The *Damaru-hasta* is the hand carrying the drum. (7) The *Ardha-chandra-hasta*, the hand unfolding itself like a crescent, represents the carrying fire. (8) The *Anjali hasta* is "the joint palm of devotion."

The spiritual qualities of images are further suggested by a refined symbolism of ornaments. Ornaments in India are ordinarily made on the analogy of flowers and fruits, not, however, as flowers and fruit are in nature, but as they have left their impress in the memory of the artisan in love with the beauty of nature, or as they have haunted his imagination and been woven by him into fanciful garlands. The names given to some of the articles of Indian jewellery are significant of their prototypes; for instance, "rui flower thread," "coco-nut flower garland," "petal garland," "string of millet flower," "ear flowers," "hair flower."

Some of the ornaments employed in South Indian bronzes have been enumerated by Mr. O. C. Gangoly. First may be mentioned the *Kati-bhanda* ("the waistband which is used for fastening

the garment, which has a buckle shaped like a dragon-head with festoons hanging down"). It is technically called *arunon-malai*, the festoons hanging down the thigh being styled *urumalai*. A similar festoon, which usually hangs from the elaborate ear ornaments, is styled *bahumalai*. The jewel band on the chest is called *ratna-kodhara-bandham*. The headgear generally known as *mukata* is of many kinds: *kiritam*, usually occurring in Vaishnavite images; *karanda* on the heads of female gods; *jata-muktam* adorns the head of Siva; while the *jata-bhandam*, coiffure, is assigned to Chandikeshwara and other saints. The *prava-torana*, or *prava-mandala*, is the "halo," "the gateway of radiance," and was originally used for the ring of fire in which Siva is represented as dancing his perennial dance.

There are certain delicately conceived similes and metaphors which the artist should have in mind when infusing form and character into his creations. These are mostly drawn from animal or vegetable forms, and not from human forms, because the Hindus believe that there is a superior uniformity and grace of form in the animal and vegetable worlds than among human beings, for as I have shown in quotations, according to the Hindu attitude "perchance one (man) in a million has perfect form, perfect beauty."† It may be interesting to note some of the conventions suggested by a contemporary Indian artist, Mr. Abanindro Nath Tagore, who, as the leader of the new movement in Indian

† *Sukraniti*.

art, may be said to have assimilated all that is finest in the traditional art of Hindustan and to have wedded it to the exigencies of modern conditions.¹

The form of the face is said to be "rounded like a hen's egg." There may, of course, be other forms, for example, the betel leaf face, the moon face, the owl face, but all these are variations of the egg-shaped face. The forehead is compared to a bow. The eyebrows are said to be "like the leaves of a neem tree or like bows," but they are not supposed to be fixed like their prototypes, being rather like a leaf disturbed by the wind, or like a bow in different degrees of tension, according as they express different emotions. The eyes, generally styled fish-shaped, are compared to deers' eyes, to the lotus lily, the lotus leaf, or to the little safari-fish, according as they express playful gaiety, innocent simplicity, calm repose, serene peacefulness, and restless movement. The ears must be "like the letter ङ. The nose and the nostrils must be like the *sesame* flower, or like the seed of a long bean. The lips are likened to the *bimba* fruit, and the *bhanduti* flower. The chin is analogous to the mango stone. The neck is modelled on the conch shell, a truly poetic simile, because the conch is used all over India for calling the worshippers to prayers in the temples. The trunk from the lower part of the head is compared to the head of a cow, apparently to suggest the power of the chest, and the slimness of the waist, and

¹ *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy.*

the looseness of the skin folding below. This part of the body has also been described as resembling the *damaru* (the hour-glass form), and the lion's body. The chest has been compared to a fastened door. The waist was always described in literature as slender like a wasp's. The shoulders are likened to an elephant's head. The forearms from the elbows to the base of the palms take their form from the trunk of a young plantain tree. Fingers should be modelled on beans or peapods. As the forearms, the thighs, too, are compared to the plantain tree, or the trunk of a young elephant. The knee-cap is likened to the skull of a crab. The shins are said to be like a fish full of roe. The hands and the feet have always been likened to a lotus.

"The characteristics of images are determined," says Sukracharya, "by the relation that subsists between the adorer and the adored." So that a ceremony of invocation is necessary if the image is to be considered a proper idol for worship. And if it is not for permanent use as an idol, it should be desecrated by *visajra* (a formula of dismissal). Images not meant for worship may, as has already been said, be designed to suit the artist's fancy, and images of clay made to serve as toys need not conform to the canon.

"THE earliest exhaustive account of the theory of painting,"¹ is given in some chapters of the *Vishnudharmottaram*, "compiled in the seventh century A.D.," though the earliest account of the subject was given in the *Chitralaksana*, a "compilation of undoubtedly ancient date, and showing indications of being based on pre-Buddhist traditions."²

The origin of this art is described in the characteristic Indian historian's manner of connecting everything with God. Narayana, the Supreme Being, was engaged in meditation when the celestial dancing girls (*apsaras*) tried to disturb him with a display of coquetry and blandishments. The God conceived of a plan to cure the maidens of their vanity. He extracted the juice of a mango tree, and using that as his paint, he drew an imaginary picture portrait of a nymph, large eyed and delicate, with a form so filled with grace that no goddess, nor woman, could vie with her in the three worlds. The *apsaras* were put to shame when they saw Urvashi, the painted maiden, and crept silently away from God's presence, and the picture, into which Divine skill had infused the golden breath of life, became the ideal type of feminine beauty. Visvakarma, the architect of heaven, was then instructed in the art and science of painting, so that he might

¹ *Vishnudharmottaram*, edited by Stella Kramrisch.

² Percy Brown, *Indian Painting*.

transmit his knowledge to the peoples of the earth.

In the *Chitralaksana* it is said that Brahma, the greatest of the gods, ordered a king to paint the portrait of a Brahmin's dead son, in order that he might put life into the boy, and restore him to his bereaved father, and that it was the first painting ever executed.

The *Dwarka-lila* has it that a princess dreamed of a beautiful youth every night, and became so enamoured of the object of her vision that she asked one of her maids of honour, a lady called Chitralekha, to transcribe the youth of her dream on paper. The maiden drew many portraits of gods and men, and ultimately succeeded in painting a dream youth, who was identified as the grandson of the god Krishna.

The garb of these mythological stories only exposes, as I have said, in a picturesque manner the Hindu desire to sustain their arts and crafts on the firm basis of their Cosmic Idealism. They consciously strove to find reasons "so that (to use the words of Vajra in the *Vishnudharmottaram*) the Deity may remain always close by, and may have an appearance according to the Shastras (holy books)."

The *Chitralaksana* views art as the finite answer to the urge of the Infinite, and suggests that the "first use of painting in India was made in the colouring and embellishment of symbols and the images of gods employed in sacrificial ceremonies." It gives detailed rules setting out the proportions for the drawing of figures from gods and kings to

normal men. The last are assigned a lesser height than the second, and the second lesser than the first. "The standard face," it is enjoined, "should be quadrangular, sharply outlined, beautifully finished with shining and splendid attributes. It should not be made triangular or crooked, nor should it be made oval or round. Whoever has painted will constantly possess blessings. For ordinary men a face longing after peace, lengthy, round, or triangular, etc., may be used." "The hair of the head of a lord of men or of gods should be fine and curly, coloured a heavenly blue." Women may, it is said, be drawn always in an upright posture.

There is confirmation in the *Chitralaksana* of the use of *Yoga* method in painting, in a way similar to that in which it was employed in image-making and the other arts. It seems that this treatise must have provided the materials for the elaborations of later codes of painting such as those developed in the *Kamasutra* of Vatsayana, and the one hundred and fifty-three other works enumerated on the topic, of which the *Bhut-chittrakala-shastra*, the *Sakti-chittrakala-shastra*, the *Loha-chittrakala-shastra*, and the *Chayya-chittrakala-shastra*, etc., are the chief. It would be impossible to compress all the rules set forth in this literature here. But an exposition of Vatsayana's *Sadanga*, or the six laws of painting, may be undertaken to illustrate the nature of these systems.¹

¹ Compare the Chinese six laws of painting which seem to have been derived from Hindu tradition, but reinter-

Rupa-bheda, Pramāṇi, Bhava, Lavanya-yojanam, Sadṛśyam, Varnika-bhanga, these are the six essential requisites of painting.

So runs the Sanskrit couplet in a commentary on Vatsyana's *Kamasutra*, written by Yasodhara.¹

I notice the approximate meaning of each of these laws here, as their exact meaning is extremely difficult to render.

The literal translation of the word *Rupa* in English is form. *Bheda* means the perception of differences or distinctions. The whole phrase may thus be rendered as meaning the perceptions of the distinctions of forms. As a law of painting, *Rupa-bheda* is the correct distinguishing of types by properly representing their *lakṣanas*, colour, etc.; in other words it means conformity to canonical prescriptions and types.

The law of *Pramāṇam* is a necessary corollary of the *Rupa-bheda* law, for it means the institution of relationships and proportions between the varied forms perceived by reference to *tala*, the canon of proportions proper to different types. "The varied forms in their very separateness," says the poet, Rabindra Nath Tagore, "must carry something which indicates the paradox of their ultimate unity, otherwise there would be no creation."²

preted to suit Chinese exigencies. Tagore, *Sadanga*; Giles, *Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*; Petrucci, *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art de l'Extreme-Orient*; Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon*.

¹ Reference also to the eight limbs of painting given in *Samarariganasutradhāra*.

² *Rupam*, No. 9, January 1922.

The word *pramana* was used by the *Yogacara* school of Buddhist philosophy. Monsieur P. Masson-Oursel has very ably traced the connection between this philosophical meaning and the aesthetic view implied in the word by Vatsayana when he made it one of the laws of painting. "Buddhist (*Yogacara*) idealism . . . professes in the first place that truth is not derived from experience . . . and, in the second place, that knowledge creates its objects instead of moulding itself on pre-existing things, external to the mind. The object does not imply a reality to be reached; it consists in the completion of a cognitive process correctly carried out; it is rather an end (*artha*) than a thing. Where realistic common sense believes that it grasps a fact, the idealist sees in this pretended fact only the completion of a spiritual activity. And what can that be but the natural result of the normal and correct activity of thought? . . . Indian artists and metaphysicians were in agreement that it was not material objects, but more or less *apriori* abstract types, whether types of being or types of knowledge, that are worthy of attention. This conclusion harmonises with the result of almost every investigation that bears on the profounder postulates of Indian thought. For the best established object is *dharana*, which is only being in so far as it becomes 'law.' The most indubitable empirical fact is *karma*, which is event or purpose as it becomes 'activity.' The thing always reduces itself to the aspect of a spiritual operation. Instead of speaking of 'types of being'

and 'types of knowledge,' we really ought to recognise only 'types of activity.' " "Aesthetic *pramana*," therefore, "expresses in plastic terms the norm of properly directed action (*correction du savoir-faire*), speculative *pramana* expresses metaphysically the norm of properly directed thought (*correction du savoir-pensée*)."¹

The relating activity which gives to our experience a unity does so by establishing the proportions of the individual elements by reference to a norm. In art this is achieved by defining the parts of a figure according to the *tala*, and only thus is every element in a good picture or a statue seen in a perfect harmony. To illustrate what would happen if this rule was ignored, Rabindra Nath Tagore has said that "a leg dismembered from the body has the fullest license to make a caricature of itself. But as a member of the body it has its responsibility to the living unity which rules the body; it must behave properly, it must keep proportions. If, by some monstrous chance of physiological profiteering, it could outgrow by yards its fellow-stalker, then we know what a picture it would offer to the spectator and what embarrassment to the body itself."²

Bhava means emotion. The dominating emotion infused in a form determines the quality of a work of art.

¹ Masson-Oursel, "A Connection between Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy," translated by Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Rupam*, Nos. 27 and 28, July-October 1926.

² *Rupam*, No. 9, January 1922.

Lavanya Yojanam may be rendered as the infusion of grace, charm, beauty, or artistic quality into a painting. It has been defined as the liquid lustre which makes the pearls shine forth, and but for which they would be no better than stones.

Sadrishya is imitation of likeness or resemblance to reality.¹ It must be noted, however, that resemblance to reality here does not denote resemblance to things as they are ordinarily seen. "The Indian literature of art reveals the Indian view of classifying all objects into two classes, *drishtan* (seen) and *adrishtan* (unseen). The first relates to objects real, but rare as well as imaginary. These objects have their existence either in nature or in pure imagination, as the case may be. They are thus, i.e. they are as they are; or as they are imagined to be. They are, however, never capable of being seen by the eyes of the body or the mind as they are, but only as they appear. *Sadrishya* indicates what the object thus appears to be; or, in other words, as it is seen by the mind as distinguished from what it is in reality or in imagination. Art is concerned with the production of a likeness of this *Sadrishyan*. A photograph is thus a copy—the thing itself—capable of offering a *drishtan* or appearance; whereas a portrait, based on it, bears only the impress of the appearance, which is capable of being realised from the photograph. An Indian work of art is thus not a copy, but a creation—a creation of impressions produced by

¹ "It perhaps means recognisable likeness in portraiture" (Coomaraswamy in a letter to the Author).

the object, real or imaginary. Realism and idealism of the East are not, therefore, of the same import as they are in the West. Realism in India was not absolute but comparative, as if it were really a realism of idealism, because everything was looked upon as essentially unreal, though bearing the semblance of reality."¹ In this respect, then, as in others the conventions of Hindu artists were determined by the Hindu view of life. The Indian man is always searching for the Real behind nature, or, in other words, for the essential quality of which the universe is merely the appearance. To him, therefore, the term Realism, used in the ordinary European sense, seems to be a misnomer, because if Realism is to mean the copying of things it should be Reality that is copied rather than that which merely looks real but is really only apparent.

Varnika-bhanga is the law relating to the artistic use of implements and materials and the proper mixing of pigments. The importance of the rule is brought out in the supposed remark of Mahadeva (Siva) to Parbati, which I have quoted above: "All is fruitless, the repeating of *mantras*, and the telling of beads, austerities and devotion, unless one has gained the knowledge of the *varnas*—the true significance of lettering, the lustre and the virtue of figures."²

The *Vishnudharmottaram* and the *Bharata-natya-shastra* both enjoin on the artist a profound know-

¹ *Rupam*, Nos. 19 and 20, July-December 1924.

² *Bharata-natya-shastra*, 21. 60-62.

ledge of colours and the manner of fixing them. The primary colours, according to the former, are white, black, yellow, blue, and the colour of *emblic myroblan*; according to the latter, white, blue, yellow, and red. The mixtures of the last four are declared to be as follows: The combination of white and yellow produces *pandu* (yellowish white), that of white and red produces *padma* (lotus), that of white and blue produces *kapota* (grey), that of yellow and blue yields *harita* (green), that of blue and red, *kashyapa* (reddish), red and yellow mixed become *gaura* (yellowish).¹

A picture is technically styled *citra* or *pata*, and is defined in a Buddhist *Tantra* as something painted on a new white cloth and fringed. It is declared ordinarily to be two hands long and one hand broad. Besides cloth, which should never be silken, paper and the bark of a tree or its leaves or wooden panels are prescribed for painting.

The actual steps involved in the process of preparing materials are as follows: (1) *Dhauta*, to wash the material; (2) *Ghattita*, rubbing it with rice; (3) *Lanjchitta*, decorating it with ink, and (4) *Ranjita*, painting it with colours.¹

¹ "The technique of painting at Ajanta, and of Indian wall painting generally, is as follows: the surface of the hard porous rock was spread over with a layer of clay, cow dung, and powdered rock, sometimes mixed with rice-husks, to a thickness of from three to twenty millimetres. Over this was laid a fine coat of thin lime plaster which was kept moist while the colours were applied, and afterwards lightly burnished. It should be observed that prac-

Continuation of note]

tically all sculptures and sculptured surfaces were coloured in the same way with a thin plaster slip and coloured. The underdrawing is in red on the white plaster surface, then comes a thinnish terraveda monochrome showing some of the red through it, then the local colour, followed by a renewed outline in brown and black with some shading, the latter employed rather to give some impression of roundness or relief than to indicate any effect of light or shade. The bold freedom of the brush strokes seems to show that all the work was free hand, or, if any use was made of stencils, freely redrawn" (Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 89).

ALTHOUGH an elaborate list of names of authorities on architecture has been preserved in the treatise *Matsyapurāṇam*, we have very scanty literature left to us on the science of architecture itself. We can, however, collect some rules about it from the *Matsyapurāṇam* and the other *Silpa-shāstras*.¹

The underlying principles here, as in painting and sculpture, are mainly philosophical and religious. The following steps are laid down in the *Kākī kagama* as sacred preliminaries to the actual construction of a building: (1) the investigation of an auspicious time by means of astrological observations for beginning a building; (2) the selection of a suitable site; (3) the performance of sacrificial rites; (4) the planning; (5) the levelling of the site determined; (6) the placing of foundations; (8) the digging of foundations; (9) laying out works; (10) the offering of sacrifice to the gods; (11) the erections of *verandhas* and open spaces; and (12) the laying down of the foundation stone ceremoniously.

The significance of the suitability of various times is summed up in the *Viśvakarmapārkasa* in a way which might seem superstitious to us, but which was perhaps determined by considerations of climate: "Anyone having a house constructed in the month of *Chaitra*, suffers from disease; in *Vaiśakha*,

¹ For an exhaustive survey of the principles of Indian architecture, see Acharya, *Dictionary of Indian Architecture*.

gets wealth; in *Jaistha*, dies; in *Asada*, might find himself rich in servants and animals; in *Sravana*, form new friends; in *Bhadra*, find himself friendless; in *Asvina*, incur enemies; in *Katrika*, derives wealth; in *Margasira*, acquires more wealth; in *Pausa*, may be attacked by thieves; in *Magha*, may fear fire; in *Phalguna*, may be very fortunate."

The plot of land which smells of *ghee* (clarified butter) is most appropriate for the Brahmins to build on, that which smells of blood for the Kshatriyas; if it has the odour of rice the Vaishyas might choose it; and if it smells of wine the Shudras might build on it.

An alternative rule for the selection of land is as follows:

Sweet earth for the Brahmin,
Bitter earth for the Kshatriya,
Sour earth for the Vaishyas,
Pungent earth for the Shudras.*

Land "at the side of a temple or in front of one, land frequented by devils and hobgoblins, land on the right side of a temple sacred to Kali, or land belonging to the high road, are not suitable for building sites. Should, however, a man be so far lost to decency as to build upon these sites, his wife and children shall die, his cattle and all that he has will perish, and alone in the world, he will wander from place to place, a beggar upon alms. The site of an old and ruined temple, land in which snakes

* "A Tamil Silpa-shastra," Kearns, *Indian Antiquary*, 1876, p. 231.

dwell, land upon which pariahs resided, land upon which the sages have resided, burning-grounds, battle-fields, these are unsuitable for building sites. Should a man build upon them, he and his relations will perish, and the house will become a jungle."¹

When selected "divide the site into sixty-four parts," it is enjoined. "The four central portions constitute the Brahmin's place (*sthanam*), the four portions or rooms at the corner of the Brahmin's *sthanam* are for the guardian daemons, the eight portions or rooms adjoining these latter are for the guardian deities, the remaining forty-eight portions are for the use of the people."²

The rules concerning the building of temples are more elaborate. First of all, adequate care ought to be taken in the construction of a gnomon. It should be "twelve fingers in length; three-fourths of which should be absorbed by the head (or the thickest part of the instrument), and the remaining one-fourth should taper off to a point like a needle, the whole being turned in a lathe, and resembling in shape a conch shell."³

There are about twenty kinds of temples: (1) The *Meru* which is sex-angular, has twelve stories, variegated windows, four entrances, and is thirty-two cubits wide. (2) The *Mandara* is thirty cubits in extent, and has ten stories and turrets. (3) The *Kailasha*, too, has turrets. It has eight stories, and measures twenty-eight cubits. (4) The *Vimana*,

¹ "A Tamil Silpa-shastra," Kearns, *Indian Antiquary*, 1876, p. 231.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

which is twenty-one cubits in extent, has latticed windows. (5) The *Nandana*, which has six stories and sixteen cupolas, measures thirty-two cubits. (6) The *Samudga* (i.e. a round box) is round. (7) The *Padma* (lotus) has the shape of a lotus, measures eight cubits, and has one spire and only one story. (8, 9) The *Garuda* and the *Nandin*, which are modelled on the form of the Sun-eagle, are twenty-four cubits wide. They must be constructed with seven stories and adorned with twenty cupolas. (10) The *Kunjara* (elephant) has a figure like an elephant, and is sixteen cubits long and broad at the base. (11) The *Grharaja* also measures sixteen cubits. Both 10 and 11 have a roof with dormer windows. (12) The *Vrsa* (bull) has a single story, and one turret. It is round everywhere, and measures twelve cubits. (13) The *Hansa* (swan) is swan-shaped. (14) The *Ghata* has the form of a water-jar, and is eight cubits long. (15) The *Sarvatobhadra* has four entrances, many summits, many beautiful windows, and five stories, and is twenty-five cubits long. (16) The *Sinha* is a building with twelve *angules*, and is protected by images of lions, and is eight cubits wide. (17-20) The Rotunda, Quadrangle, Octangle, and Sixteen Angles are dark in the interior. The quadrangle has five cupolas, while the rest have only one.

The general design of temples is some such as follows: There is the *garbhagriha* (the womb of the house), the *antarala* (the anti-temple), and the *ardha-mantapa* (the front part). The diameter of

the entire length of the building being divided into four and a half parts, of which the *garbhagriha* is to take up two, two and a half, or three; the *antarala* one and a half, or two; and the *ardha-mantapa* one or one and a half.

Other rules to be observed in the construction of temples are:

"Let the area of a temple be always divided into sixty-four squares, while it is highly commendable to plan the middle door in one of the four cardinal points. The height of any temple must be twice its own width, and the flight of steps equal to a third part of the whole height (of the edifice). The *adytum* (interior) measures half the extent (of the whole), and has its separate walls all round. Its door is one fourth of the *adytum* in breadth and twice as high. The side frame of the door has a breadth of one fourth of the altitude; likewise the threshold; the thickness of both doorposts is . . . equal to one fourth of the breadth. A door with three-, five-, seven-, or nine-fold side frames is much approved. At the lower end, as far as the fourth part of the attitude of the doorpost, should be stationed the statues of the two door-keepers. Let the remaining part be ornamented with (sculptured) birds of good augury, figures, crosses, jars, couples, foliage, tendrils, and goblins. The idol, along with its seat, ought to have a height equal to that of the door, diminished by one eighth, of which two-thirds are appropriated to the image and one third to the seat."¹

¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (N.S.), VI, p. 317.

The rules regarding the raising of secular structures are quite as well defined as those about the building of temples. The village, it is enjoined, for instance, "should be divided into eight or nine equal parts, both in length and breadth."¹ The central portion which is appropriate for Brahmins to live in is called the *Brahma*. The next part, styled *Daiva*, is also assigned to the Brahmins. The portion immediately next, called *Paisaca*, is given to artisans, labourers, and members of the non-dwija (not twice born) castes.

Considerations religious, economic, and social seem to have determined the apportioning of the outlying portions to the different sections of the community. For instance: "Outside the village site on the south should be the sheds for the cattle, on the north should be flower gardens, on the east should be stables, barracks, and on the west the residences of the aristocracy. Inside the village southwards should live merchants, and the labourers should be close to them. The quarters of brick makers should be in the east or north, and near them should live barbers and other artisans engaged in the crafts. In the north-west the quarters of the fishermen should be situated. In the west should be the houses of men engaged in the trade of the flesh. The quarters of oilmen should be in the north. All parts of the town should be supplied with water by means of cisterns, wells, etc. In a town in which all the four classes of people live, the king should

¹ *Vedic Magazine*, March 1925, pp. 19, 25.

have his own residence with his face towards the east or north. On the north-east of the king's palace should live *acarya* (teachers), *purohita* (priests), and the king's other ministers. There should be (sacred) places for fire and water. On the south-east should be stables for elephants, and accommodation for stores. Beyond this, on the east should be the houses of Kshatriyas and the principal artisans, etc., dealing in perfumes, flowers, corns, and juice extractors. In the south-east should be situated the house of potters, moneylenders, banks, and shops for the sale of articles of daily use. In the south-west should be the storehouse and the arsenal. Beyond these, on the south, should be the residential portions of the citizens, dealers in corn, of manufactured articles, of army and police officials, confectioners, wine sellers, butchers, harlots, dancing girls, and vaisyas."¹

¹ *Vedic Magazine*, March 1925, pp. 19, 25.

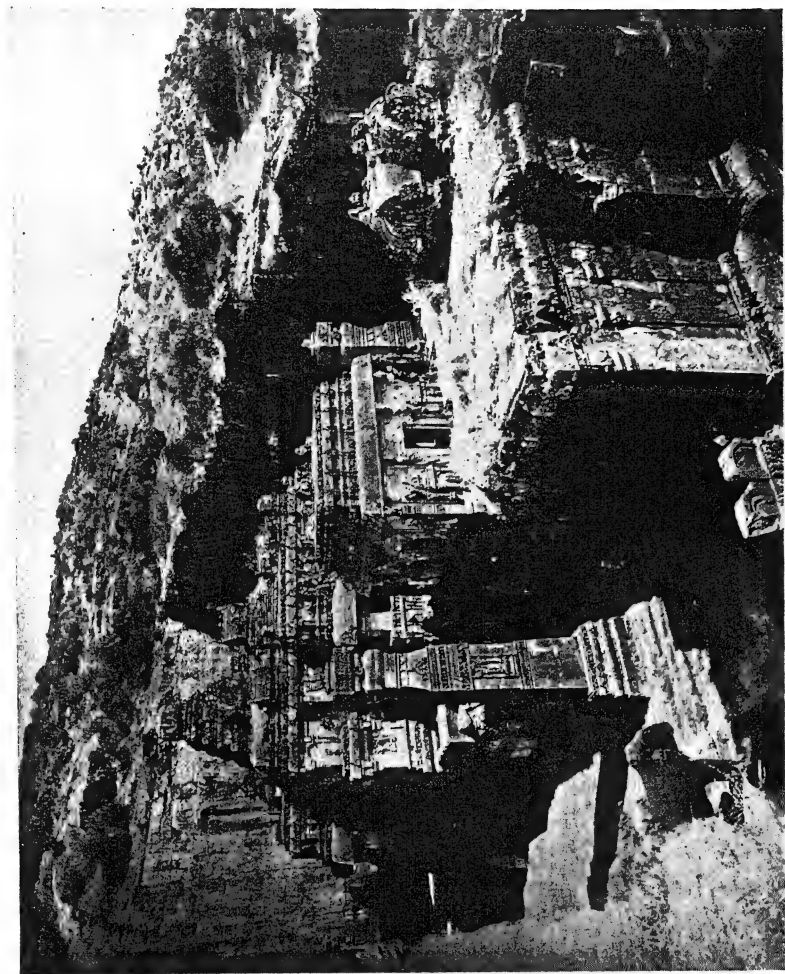


PLATE XVI.—THE GREAT MONOLITHIC TEMPLE OF KAILASA AT ELURA

By kind permission of Henry Consens



CONCLUSION

It is a fortunate circumstance that the religious philosophy and the philosophical religion, which I have explained as supplying the chief basis of India's artistic culture, still has a strong hold on the conscience of the Indian people. It may have lost its true and proper meaning for some of them. It may have become a dogma to others. The lofty idealism of its original impulse may in the very process of its reconciliation with the limitations of humanity have become coated with a thick crust of mendacity and superstition, but I believe that the truth conceived by the sages of ancient Hindu thought and practised by their followers during the ages is in the blood of India. It is an inheritance at birth from father to son, and from son to son; and, if it does not come out in its purity and its strength to-day, if it has been polluted by the accretions of wrong thinking of the Hindus themselves, or by the imposition of alien cultures upon them, it will emerge intact one day—one day when Indians search within their hearts for this truth, or lifting the veil of sensualism and materialism in which their pandering to alien ideals has enshrouded them, they look for it among themselves in the soil of India. For Hindu idealism is not only in the blood of India, it is also in the soil of India. As a matter of fact, it was first in the soil of India, and only later entered the blood of India, for was it not India's vast

expanses, its high hills and dimple-like valleys, and the deep immensity of its evergreen forests, that evoked from the ancient sages the gospel of the Veda and the Vedanta, or Buddhism and Jainism, and of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*?

But debased and demoralised Hinduism apart, Hinduism, I say, has still a strong hold on the conscience of the Indian people. A few at least of India's men and women still know the Truth and worship it. These are the real and genuine Indians who live in the poor little villages and the humble towns, and earn a meagre but enjoyable living by tilling its soil. These you may still find gathered on the banks of India's holy waters, greeting the bright sun at dawn with sweet Rig-Vedic hymns, or you may see them crowding the corridors of their temples when, their day's task finished, they go to offer formal prayers to the Deity whose name has been on their lips all day. It is these people who make one feel that Hinduism, pure Hinduism, still persists in the heart of Aryavarta to-day. And it is with these people that the artistic tradition seems to persist; for them at least art has a meaning.

If, then, a renaissance of Indian art is to come, it will come from among the masses, from among the fervent devotees who still believe in the ideals of India. But the immediate need of the moment is that this belief should be strengthened and reconciled with what is best in the beliefs of the other races of the world. A religious revival of this kind

has, indeed, been going on for some centuries now. M. Romain Rolland has collected evidence of it in his epoch-making volume on the prophets of the New India. It is a vital movement, fraught with the greatest possibilities, and might surprise some into asking how it is that, while Greece and Rome and Egypt lie dead, India should be standing on the threshold of a new renaissance.

I do not propose here to inquire into the whys and wherefores of India's perennial youth, but I may offer a clue to the mystery to those who may be anxious to probe it further for themselves by urging that the secret of India's capacity for constant renewal lies in the broad religio-philosophical truth which supplies the basis to its culture, literary, artistic, social, and political. The Hindus had explored all the ramifications of life and Reality, and found its truth to be Infinite, Inexhaustible, deserving of the most divergent speculations that men might make concerning it. The world was to them essentially composed of differences, and yet essentially calling for a harmony of differences. They did not shut God up within the narrow walls of an irrefutable dogma, or separate Him into the watertight compartments of rigid sectarian schemes. The followers of Vishnu in India also worship Siva, and, if they do not, they have at least as much respect for the gods of other peoples as for their own, for even the most illiterate man in India knows that all gods are equally the manifestations of the one supreme Ishvara, though it just happens that one

man finds in Vishnu, and the other in Siva, the particular qualities of the One God that appeal to him most. As many men, so many gods, the Hindus recognised to be a truth following from the limitations, the finitude of humanity, and from the narrowness of its points of view, and they forgave others for not thinking of their gods exactly in their own way. Nay, they even tolerantly assimilated the gods of others into their own pantheon, so that Vishnu as well as Muhammad and Jesus Christ (and even King George!) have been *avatars* for them, the incarnations of the Supreme Deity.

The Hindu Ishvara was not only not jealous of other gods, but in the gentle spirit of a gracious condescension He recognised the difficulties that men have to go through to realise Him: "Exceeding great is the toil of those whose minds are attached to the Unshown; for the Unshown way is painfully won by those that wear the body." "But as for those who having cast all works on Me and given themselves over to Me, worship me in meditation, with wholehearted *Yoga*, these speedily I lift up from the sea of life and death, O partha, their minds being set on Me." So that "when any devotee seeks to worship any form with faith, it is none other than Myself that bestows that steadfast faith. When by worshipping any form he wins what he desires, it is none other than Myself that grants His prayers. Howsoever men approach Me, so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine."

A culture founded on such a broad and tolerant philosophy could hardly have died out, and it is because I am convinced that Hinduism adapts itself with infinite grace to every new circumstance that its revival seems to me to open up the widest hope of a cultural renaissance.

In the special domain of art, India has already witnessed the dawn of a new era in the emergence of a school in Bengal. The methods formulated by Mr. Abanindro Nath Tagore and his disciples combine the traditional laws of ancient Indian craftsmen with the theories of modern European and Far-Eastern artists. These methods might well supply examples for other parts of India to follow. When the new movement has become widespread, then the time will come for the formulation from it of the aesthetics of the New India. Meanwhile the ideals of the past must be properly rediscovered in India, and be clearly reconciled with the needs of the moment, for when art falters, when it speaks no longer with the voice of God, but in the stammering accents of baffled and weary men, the true artist must explore the ideals of the past, and in their light define the ideals of the present. He must study the problems of old ages, and, from them, formulate the problems of to-day; he must set art back on the strong foundations of all the godly virtues.



CHRONOLOGY

Grateful acknowledgments are due to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy for the material embodied in the following table.

Dravidian civilisation	4000 B.C.	
The Indus civilisation, of which remains have been found at Mohenjo-Daro	3500-2500	
Indo-Iranian separation	2500	
Aryan invasions	2000-1500	
(Borghaz-koi inscriptions, Cappadocia, ca. 1400)	1500 (or earlier)	<i>Rig-Veda.</i>
	800 (about)	<i>Brahmanas.</i> Oldest Upanishads. Caste system developing.
SAISUNAGA DYNASTY	600	
Bimbisara	530	Parkham statue, Mathura.
Kunika Ajatasatru	515	Mahavira.
	540-468	Buddha.
	563-483	
	516	
Darius in the Punjab	500-200	Vedic <i>Sutras</i> , later Upanishads, early forms of Epics; Buddhist canon and Buddhist birth stories.
		Early Vaishnava and Saiva theism. <i>Bhagavad-Gita.</i>
		Panini, grammarian.
		Taxila.
Alexander's invasion	327-325	

MAURYA DYNASTY			
Chandragupta			<i>Arthashastra</i> of Chanakya.
Asoka	322-184 322-296 274-237		Pataliputra. Megasthenes at Asoka's court. Pillar edicts and missions. Sanchi stupa. Buddhism reaches Ceylon. Earliest cave temples.
INDO-GREEK AND DYNASTIES IN THE PUNJAB	250 B.C.-60 A.D.		
	2nd century		Patanjali mentions Hindu images. Vaishnava pillar erected by Heliodora. Barhut railing, 2nd century. Amravati stupa, 2nd century. Sanchi rails and toranas, 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. Earliest Ajanta paintings.
ANDHRA DYNASTY	220 B.C.- 236 A.D.		Bodh-Gaya railing, 1st century B.C. Buddhist caves at Bedsa, Karle, Nasik, Kondane, etc.
SUNGA DYNASTY	184-72 155		Gudimallam lingam. Sacrificial post of Isapur (first Sanskrit inscription). Buddhist canon committed to writing.
Menander in Sindh			
Saka and Kushan invasions	150 72-27		
KANVA DYNASTY	88 58		
Vikrama Samvat era			

KUSHANA DYNASTY

Kanishka

Vashishka

Huvishka

Vasudeva, 140

Saka era

Early Pandya, Chola, and Chera kingdoms in the South

65-225 A.D.

78-120

Indo-Hellenistic art of Gandhara.

Mathura school.

Amravati sculptures.

Apollonius of Tyana in India, 43-44.

67

78

Buddhism reaches China.

Jainism divided into two sects: *Digambara* and *Svetambra*.

Ashvagoshha: Nagarjuna.

Arya Sura: Asanga: Vasubandhu, Roman trade.

Tamil sangam: Bhasha, early Sanskrit dramatist.Laws of Manu. *Kamasutra*.

Classical Sanskrit and Mahayana form of Buddhism: further development of

Vaishnavism and Saivism. Mathe-

matics, drama (Kalidasa, Bharta),

music, coins. Final rescensions of

Epics. Vayu, Vishnu, and other Pu-

ranas, Harivamsa, etc. Paintings of

Ajanta and Sigri. Buddhism in Ceylon

(Anuradhapura). Brick and stone

GUPTA DYNASTY

Chandragupta I

Samudragupta

Chandragupta II

Kumaragupta I

Skandagupta

Kumaragupta II

(Later Gupta dynasty of Magadha)

320-650

320

330

375

414

455

473

535-720

First invasion of the Huns	450	Brahmanical architecture. Buddhist,
PALLAVA DYNASTY (South)	6th to 10th century	Jain, and Brahmanical excavated temples. Indonesian colonies. intercourse with China.
Mahendravarman	600	Travels of Fa Hsien, 399-413.
Narasimhavarma	625	Aryabhata, b. 476.
Mihirgula (Hun)	510-540	Buddhism in Siam.
CHALUKYAN DYNASTY (Deccan)	550-1190	Kanchipuram, Mamallapuram (earliest Dravidian architecture). Primitive architecture of Cambodia.
Pulakesin II	608	Varahamihira, d. 587.
Narsavardhana	606-647	Early temples of Badami, Osia, and Aihole.
Hijra era (flight of Muhammad from Mecca)	622	Travels of Hsuan Tsang, 629-645.
		Nalanda university.
		Mahayana Buddhism brought to Cambodia and Indonesia.
		Travels of I Ching, 671-695.
		Santi Deva
	5th to 9th century	Saiva hymnists. Tirujnana, Sambhanda Swami, Tirumular, and Sundaramurti Swami.

Rise of the Rajputs
Arab conquest of Sindh

700
712
8th century

Mannika Vacagar.
Twelve Vaishnava Alvars.
Decline of Buddhism throughout India
except Bengal, and decline of Jainism
in South.

Elephanta, Elura (Brahmanical excavations and sculpture).
Fall of Anuradhapura and establishment
of Buddhism in Ceylon.

Mihira Bhoja
PALA DYNASTY of Bengal
Dharampala
Devapala

c. 840-900
730-1197
780-892

Rajasekhara.
Dhiman and Bitpalo, sculptors.
Development of Tantrik Buddhism in
Bengal and Nepal.
Saivism in Kashmir.
Sankaracharya, 780-850.

Bhagavata-purana.

Khmer art (Cambodia), 6th to 13th
century.

Jayavarman
(Cambodia)

802-869

Pagan (Burma), 742.
Early Sham art (Annam), 7th to 11th
century.

Nepalese <i>Samvat</i> era	8th to 10th century	Architecture at Khajuraho, Gwalior, Mount Abu, and in Orissa.
EARLY CHALUKYAN DYNASTY	879	Borobudur and Prambanan, Java, 8th to 9th century (Sumatran power).
LATER CHOLA DYNASTY	973-1198	Angkor Thom, Cambodia, 9th century.
Rajaraja Deva	907-1310	Tanjore temple.
Mahmud of Ghazna	985-1035	Ramanuja, b. 1016.
Raja Bhoja of Dhar	1008-1027	Abhinavagupta, fl. 1000.
HOYSHALA DYNASTY	1018-1060	Hemachandra, 1089-1173.
	1110-1327	Schwezigon and Ananda pagodas.
SENA DYNASTY	1119-1199	Paga, 1090.
Bengal		
Prithvi Raj	1182	Sham capital at Binh Dinh, 1100.
Changez Khan, b. 1162		Angkor wat, Cambodia, 11th to 12th century.
Muhammadian conquest of Delhi and Bengal	1199-1200	Hindu rule in East Java, 10th to 16th century.
Slave Kings of Delhi	1206	Destruction of Buddhist monasteries.
	13th century	Madhava, 1119-1198.
		Architecture in Orissa (Konarak, etc.).
		Jayadeva, poet.
		Nimbarka.

KHILJI DYNASTY	1290-1318	Saiva Siddhanta.
Kingdom of Vijayanagar supersedes	1336-1346	Fall of Pagan, Burma, 1287.
Chola, Chera, and Pandya powers		Marco Polo in South India.
Timur sacks Delhi	1398	Panataran, Java.
	14th century	
	1450-1526	Guru Nanak (first Sikh Guru).
LODI DYNASTY	1347-	Ramananda, Vidyapati, Chandidas.
BAHMANI DYNASTY (Deccan)	1490-1673	
Adil Shahi kings of Bijapur	15th century	Vallabha, b. 1479.
		Kabir, d. 1518.
		Chaitanya, 1485-1533.
		Zenith of Vernacular Hindi and Bengali literatures.
		Siamese conquest of Cambodia, 1473.
Krishnaraya Deva of Vijayanagar	1478	Muhammadan conquest of Java.
	16th to 17th century	Hinduism survives in Bali.
		Tulsi Das, 1532-1623.
		Portuguese at Calicut, 1498.
MUGHAL DYNASTY	1526-1671	
Babur	1526-1530	
Humayun		

Akbar	1556-1606	Hindu-Muslim unity brought about by the Great Mughal. Conquest of Kashmir, Kangra, and much of Rajputana. Mughal painting.
Jahangir	1606-1627	Rajput painting.
Shah Jahan	1627-1658	London East India Company, 1600. English factory at Surat, 1608. La Compagnie des Indes, 1664.
Aurangzeb	1675-1708	Sikhs become a political power.
Guru Gobind Singh	1674-1680	The rise of the Marhattas.
Sivaji	1739	
Nadir Shah sacks Delhi	1858	
British Empire	19th century	Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj. Brahmo Samaj. Prophets of the New India: Ramakrishna, Vivekananda. Poets of the New India: Toru Dutt, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Muhammad Iqbal, Sarojini Naidu, Bhai Vir Singh. Nationalism.
	20th century	Bengal painters.

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